OF REAL LIFE.

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

"Fictions, to please, must wear the face of Truth."

Qui capit ille facit.

THIRD EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
NTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1815.

Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-Street, London.

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THOUGH Prefaces are not much in favour with Novel Readers, the Author requests their indulgence a few minutes, while he introduces to their notice, his *Sketches of Character*.

The Title will no doubt deter the lovers of Romance, from wasting their time, in the perusal of the following pages:—should the sentimentalist deign to inspect them, it is to be feared little or nothing will be found to suit his taste; and to very few, will the whole prove palatable. But the Reader should not be discouraged, because the first volume may disappoint him; the second or third may be found more amusing; and if here and there he should meet with some entertaining matter, it is as much as is to be expected from the generality of Novels: every one has parts, which are good, bad, and indifferent; even the most approved contain glaring inconsistencies.

As this little Work professes to be simply *Sketches* of Men and Manners, it must not be regarded in the more serious light of a moral tale; in which the contrast of good and bad examples, forms a principal feature; nor is it indeed, consistent with real life, that virtue and vice should be represented as always receiving their proper rewards and punishments.

Some

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remembered that " *m[illegible]*
— And as it may be conten[illegible]
cient degree of interest kept up, the A[illegible]
apprize his Readers that they are not to expect a [illegible]
chain of interesting events, or a Hero and Heroine introduced as patterns of imitation, or as the chief subject of these volumes: he has attempted to draw a faithful Sketch of living manners, to which end the story is made subservient. Some degree of high colouring is always allowable, in order to give effect to comic scenes; but the Author has endeavoured not to "*o'erstep the modesty of nature.*" As a negative recommendation he [illegible]s the following pages will be found unsullied by descriptions of an immoral tendency; and though, in attempting to expose the follies of the day, he has been obliged to exhibit scenes, in which society appears in a trifling and vicious point of view, he hopes, while they may be regarded as amusing specimens of real life, they may suggest some useful reflections.

The Author, however, has not paused to moralize; he gives his Readers credit for extracting from the work, such improvement as it is capable of affording, convinced that instruction never makes so deep an impression, as when it is the result of our own observation.

CONTENTS

THE flattering reception which "Sketches of Character" experienced, has induced the Author to offer a Third Edition, in which he has made such alterations and additions, as will, he hopes, render it better entitled to public favour.

In a work intended to represent living manners, it was scarcely possible to draw characters which might not be applied to real persons; but, though the Author has endeavoured to give an air of reality to the scenes and characters introduced, they are not to

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personality, which it has bee...

wish to avoid.

The Author avails himself of this opportunity of acknowledging the gratifying notice taken of the work by the Reviews.

PRE-

CHAPTER I.

COUNTRY LIFE.

"SIR PHILIP, have you observed the sudden alteration in the shrubbery?" said Lady Aucherly, turning her head towards the windows, as the servants were bringing in the desert, "a week ago it exhibited all the beautiful tints of autumn, and now, scarcely a leaf remains."

"I have observed shrubberies alter in November, these forty years," replied Sir Philip.

"Close the shutters, Wade," said her ladyship—"I hate to see the dead leaves whisking about the windows—how *very* cold this room is."

wh...

"I had no ...
intended for a *wint*...
her ladyship.

A silence ensued which lasted very nearly five minutes.

"This melon," said Lady Aucherly, "is the sort you so much admired at Mr. Smith-Bouverie's; I saved some of the seed, and this is the first we have raised, but I question its flavour, so late in the season."

Sir Philip cast a glance at the melon, and then drank off his wine and soda-water.

"You know the Dorringtons are gone to Bath;" continued Lady Aucherly, and shaking some sugar over a slice of the melon, presented it to Sir Philip; "they got there in *one* day."—

"And do you really think my memory so bad, that after travelling so much as I have, I must be reminded what journey can be performed in one day?"

"We are all, I believe," returned her ladyship, "liable to forgetfulness, or I might

...re sa-
... country,
...se to conform to
your caprice.

As Sir Philip had not a tart reply in readiness, and the slice of melon still continuing untouched before him, he thought he could not do better than to push it from him, with "Who can eat melon in cold weather?"

"Pepper it then."

"You know I am forbidden to take spices," said Sir Philip peevishly—"One would think you wished to bring on another fit of the gout."

Lady Aucherly bit the corner of her under lip; she was aware that Sir Philip had lately acquired an obstinacy, which required no small skill to overcome, but as she seldom lost her self-possession, she was determined rather to end the subject amicably, than by a cutting reply to aggravate their dispute, and was preparing to say something conciliatory, when a footman brought in some cards, which had been left in the morning.

"*Mrs. Mansell to take leave,*" said Lady

 Aucherly,

Auchle
Bath ;— e
of the year, when ...
so bleak ; I wonder you won't take the physician's advice and try the Bath waters—you know they say a fit of the gout would be of infinite service to you."

"Can any thing be more absurd," said the baronet with warmth, "here I am enjoying tolerable health, with occasional attacks of the gout, which render me uncomfortable enough, and you would recommend me to bring on a fit—which might kill me perhaps."

"You wilfully misconstrue the advice given you, Sir Philip ; you are now continually tormented with the gout for a length of time, but if you would be persuaded to ——"

"I hate Bath—it's a splendid hospital—a fashionable infirmary, where one cannot stir a step, without being reminded by a thousand martyrs to the same complaint, what an object of compassion one must appear."

"At the same time," replied her lady-ship,

...ion of hea... ...have been relie... ...cheering to a person in ill health, as the hope of receiving similar benefit."

"But you will allow, I suppose," said Sir Philip, "that all who go to Bath are not cured, and if I should be one of those, I fear the recovery of others, instead of cheering me, would only irritate my temper; we are all too apt to be impatient under painful disorders, and I do not pretend to more fortitude than my neighbours."

"Well," said her ladyship, poking the fire, and making a blaze, "I hope we sha'n't have so severe a winter as the last —"

"Now I must trouble you for the screen."

"I thought you seemed cold — suppose we send for the Newtons, to make up a rubber?"

"You generally affect to dislike Mrs. Newton."

"As a companion, certainly, but I have no objection to play cards with her, though she *will* say, "*Can ye one partner?*""

 "Do

" I

" Shan ... om or the library?"

" As you please."

Lady Aucherly left the baronet to his accustomed afternoon's nap: she did not feel much disappointed in his opposition to her wishes, as she had not been very sanguine in her expectations, and she now perceived that the only chance of reviving her scheme for passing two or three winter months at Bath with success, was to drop the subject before it had excited an absolute disgust; hoping therefore to restore good humour by a rubber of whist, Sir Philip's favourite game, she proposed inviting the Newtons, though they were persons whose style of life was too domestic, for their company to give her the slightest pleasure; but as they lived very near the Park, they were often invited to help off a dull evening.

" How soon do you expect your friends?" said Sir Philip, hobbling into the library.

" Immediately—they know we wish them to come early."

" I hope

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"...

"True, I'd pay every respect to your company."

Mr. Mrs. and Miss Newton were soon afterwards announced.

Sir Philip, with a frown, said he was glad to see them all, and her ladyship expressed a disappointment at not seeing both the young ladies.

"If she had been at home," said Mrs. Newton, "I am sure she would have been happy to have waited *of* you."

"And where *is* Miss Fanny?" said Lady Aucherly.

"She is still on a visit with her Grandmother, at Exeter."

"And they have been *so* gay, she writes me," said Miss Newton—"She was at the Assize Ball—and she danced with a Captain Macmaurice of the Queen's Bays—he'ssome relation I believe of your ladyships."

"My brother married Captain Macmaurice's aunt."

 "Ah,

"

and he [illegible] his father, at Brist[illegible]

"Who will play card[illegible]" asked Sir Philip.

"I'll sit out," said Lady Aucherly, "I prefer looking on."

"I never play cards," said Miss Newton.

"Oh, true, but we must teach you, I cannot suffer you to sit out doing nothing."

"Eliza has her work with her," observed Mrs. Newton, "and indeed I have brought mine too."

"And much better employment than cards," added Sir Philip.

"But dont you wish to play?" said her ladyship.

"Not to night, but Mr. Newton will have no objection, I dare say, to attack me at chess."

"None in the world," said Mr. Newton, rubbing his hands; and the chess-board was called for.

Lady

...n her, as ... out their work.

"Is that a purse you're netting?" enquired her ladyship, contracting her eyes with a frown, and half raising her eye-glass.

"Oh no," replied Miss Newton, "it's lace to go round my gown."

"Wont it hurt your eyes to work at it by candle-light?"

"There Eliza! you see her ladyship agrees with your father and me,—you had *better* give it up; she's at it all day, and I may say half the night—early and late."

"What patience Miss Eliza must have," exclaimed Lady Aucherly, closing her eyes, and gently raising them to the painted ceiling, while she passed her hand across her mouth to conceal a yawn.

"There's check to your King," said Sir Philip.

"What a stupid game that is," observed Lady Aucherly to Miss Newton.

"Oh, I play at it very often, it's a favourite game of mine."

" I...

indifference. ... de-
lighted with the ga... for my part, I could never endure the sight of the place."

"Yes," said Mrs. Newton, "but the society and friends she meets with, make it very agreeable to my daughter."

"True, society will make any place delightful."

"You've lost your neighbours the Dorringtons for this winter I hear," said Mrs. Newton.

"They're gone to Bath—so are Mr. and Mrs. Mansell, and I must say," continued Lady Aucherly, "I should like to spend a month or two there, myself. My brother's regiment is at Bristol, and my sister Mrs. St. Clair and her daughter are at Clifton."

"Sir Philip's so fond of retirement," said Mrs. Newton, "that I think we shall always have the pleasure of having you for winter neighbours."

"The pleasure will be reciprocal," said her ladyship, with concealed contempt.

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Miss Aucherly was several years older than her brother, and as she pitied the severity which his tender years received, he soon made her the confident of his sufferings, all his little griefs were poured into the sympathising bosom of his sister; and though Lady Aucherly was not absolutely destitute of maternal tenderness, yet it was accompanied with such formal marks of affection, and so blended with parental authority, that she rather inspired him with awe than love.

Miss Aucherly, however, being more immediately under the eye of her ladyship, experienced all the irritable dissatisfaction of a mother, expecting her daughter to excel in every accomplishment; besides which, she was obliged to submit, for hours at a time, to hear her mother expatiate on the mode of conduct proper to be adopted by a young lady of Miss Aucherly's rank; but Lady Aucherly laboured in vain to instil into her daughter's mind exalted ideas of the

dignity

Aucher... ...o condemn the folly ... entertaining such sentiments; and though she apparently acquiesced in the opinions of her mother and Sir John, she cherished principles diametrically opposite. She was accidentally introduced to a gentleman of the name of Simmons, a man of most amiable manners, who, after being a few times in her company, completely won her affections. Miss Aucherly knew her father would not listen to Mr. Simmons's proposals; he was in trade; and though the house of *Grimshaw and Simmons* stood as high as any in the city in the same line, yet Miss Aucherly was well aware, his being in trade was an obstacle impossible to be surmounted, and as she was of age, she asserted her right, at the expence of her parents' resentment, and consented to a private marriage.

Sir John and Lady Aucherly were exasperated; their pride had received a wound never to be healed.

Miss

wh...
Sim... ...ed;
his fortune, his respe... ...acter, every thing was urged in his favour; but in vain: Sir John and her ladyship would listen to no extenuation of the offence; they shut their doors against their only daughter for ever.

Philip was at school when this affair happened, and on his return home, had to deplore the loss of his sister's counsel on many a trying occasion.

The tempers of Sir John and Lady Aucherly acquired a greater asperity from the mortification they suffered. Philip rejoiced when the holidays were over; and while his school-fellows were eagerly counting the minutes that would elapse before they should again join their beloved circle of friends, Philip could not help sighing to think of the difference in his lot.

As he grew up, he found frequent opportunities of seeing his sister; and on his going abroad,

... a re-conciliation w... ...saken daughter, but as often as he spoke on the subject, Lady Aucherly, with a bitterness unbecoming her sex or character as a mother, checked every rising emotion of tenderness in his breast. What he had once condemned, he now, therefore, maintained; and though he really sighed for his daughter's company, he still refused to see her, lest, by doing so, he should acknowledge to the world he had before been in error.

When Philip was on his travels, Sir John was taken dangerously ill; his son was shocked at the alarming accounts he received, and hastened home; but ere he quitted the Continent, a letter arrived, informing him of the fatal termination of his father's illness.

The death of a parent can hardly fail of softening the heart of the most unfeeling child: Sir Philip was naturally of an affectionate disposition, and had he received different

ha. [illegible]

row; [illegible] the first emotions of gri[illegible] subsided, he regarded the event with mingled sensations of regret and satisfaction. He rather lamented that he had not been blessed with a father, for whose death he should have felt the deepest affliction, than wished to recall him to life; for it cannot but follow that the tie of nature must be weakened, when the father acts the guardian instead of the parent, and governs his children more by fear than love.

Sir Philip was now in one of the most dangerous situations in which a young man can be placed. He was master of a large fortune, and at liberty to act as he pleased; it was therefore not unlikely, from his having been hitherto denied the means of various enjoyments, that he would now plunge into the extreme of dissipation and extravagance; his acquaintance was courted by crowds of flatterers, who were all desirous of engaging his friendship; Sir Philip, however,

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... ho-
nour; they ... entice their friend to a gaming-table, in the hope of enriching themselves by his inexperience; they, on the contrary, rather warned him from the dangers attendant on a love for play.

The young baronet was sensible of their good intentions, and profited by their advice. The gaieties of the beau monde, however, were irresistible, and Sir Philip yielded to the fashion of the day, and became one of the most eager votaries in the pursuit of pleasure.

He was conspicuous at every place of fashionable resort, and soon found himself attacked by all the beauties who were engaged in matrimonial speculation; but on his being introduced to Mrs. Lethbridge and her two beautiful daughters, it was soon observed that Caroline Lethbridge had completely the advantage over all other competitors for the baronet's heart.

Mrs. Lethbridge had been accustomed to a fashion-

her
nt pleasures
of er grief on the
death of Mr. Lethbridge, when she learnt that his affairs were not a little embarrassed by the extravagant life they had led. She now found herself obliged to exchange the elegant house and luxurious life to which she had been accustomed, for an humble residence and prudential economy; for upon an investigation of Mr. Lethbridge's property, after paying his large debts, there remained but a straightened income for the widow, very small portions for her daughters, and the wreck of a once large estate for the son.

Bitterly did Mrs. Lethbridge suffer the reverse of fortune; her only hope of regaining some of her former consequence rested on her children; if they marry well, she would think to herself, I will again hold up my head; till then I must bend to my fate.

The best part of her conduct appeared in the sacrifices she made for the benefit of her children, though not entirely without selfish motives: her income was very small, yet she

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her children w… …or-
tunes, and to purchase a commission for her son in the army.

Her daughters were placed at an expensive fashionable seminary, where only a limited number of pupils were received; and her son had the advantage of a college education.

The Miss Lethbridges left Mrs. Allen's when the eldest was just seventeen, and Caroline a year younger; the pleasure they anticipated on returning home was considerably clouded by leaving their young friends, particularly Laura Stephens, between whom and Caroline Lethbridge a more than common degree of friendship subsisted.

Mrs. Lethbridge received her daughters with rapture: they were beautiful, accomplished to her satisfaction, and submissive to her directions. She now determined to emerge from her obscurity, and exhibit her daughters at Bath, where the concourse of company, and the cheapness of the amuse-

ments

theatre for her [illegible] ...ay, though Bath was very full, and many dashing men appeared there, she soon perceived there was not one of sufficient rank or fortune to answer her designs; she therefore prudently withdrew from the scene, and contented herself with retiring, for the remainder of the winter, to her former residence.

The following summer was a remarkably gay season at Brighton, and Mrs. Lethbridge repaired thither with her daughters at the time Sir Philip Aucherly was sporting his phaeton and four in hand.

Mrs. Lethbridge studied Sir Philip's character, and gave her daughters directions accordingly: the youngest attached herself to the baronet, and married him, and the eldest had the good fortune to captivate Lieutenant St. Clair, of the navy, a cousin of the Duke of Montolieu, to whom she was soon afterwards united.

Mrs. Lethbridge congratulated herself upon the success of her schemes, and now looked forwards to being again recognized in

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ever, were of ver, short dur... ...ied within a year after Caroline's marriage.

Sir Philip, proud of his beautiful wife, settled in town, where Lady Aucherly distinguished herself by superior elegance of manners. Her portrait at full length had been exquisitely painted, and exhibited at Somerset House, and in a short time afterwards a fine engraving of her ladyship appeared at all the print shops. Sir Philip's vanity was gratified, and as he adored his wife, she soon obtained an ascendancy over him, of which he was not aware; for on his father's death he had resolved to maintain his own will, but Lady Aucherly had such an insinuating method of accomplishing her wishes, that Sir Philip imagined he always had his own way.

Repeated successes, however, having made her ladyship very bold in her managing schemes, Sir Philip began, by degrees, to see through her manœuvring system, and when he suspected himself attacked, would often obstinately oppose her, even when his inclinations coincided with her own.

Lady

Lady A [illegible] more
his [illegible] having been
introd[illegible] of the Newtons announced, they took leave.

"Heavens be praised!" cried Lady Aucherly, throwing herself on a sofa—"How could they think of bringing that stupe of a Miss Newton?—Fanny is a smart girl—tiresome evening!"

"You *would* have them," replied Sir Philip, kicking her ladyship's Bijou from the hearth rug.

"I thought you would have played cards."

"I never said so; on the contrary, I rather discouraged their coming."

"Good G–d!" exclaimed Lady Aucherly, rising hastily, and ringing for her woman, retired to her chamber.

The next morning, Sir Philip received several letters, one of which only was of any consequence—it occasioned him a great deal of consideration: he however put it in his pocket before Lady Aucherly came down to breakfast. She was glad to find him in a better humour than on the preceding

 evening,

evenin
told her h to
Bath.

Her ladyship was sure it would be of service to him.

"And the sooner the better," said he.

Her ladyship perfectly agreed; orders were immediately issued to the household for their journey, and Lady Aucherly wrote to Bath for the best lodgings that could be procured.

Every thing now went on smoothly, Lady Aucherly seemed the happiest woman on earth, and actually assisted Gifford in packing up her clothes.

The travelling chaise was at the door by nine o'clock, but it was not till Lady Aucherly heard the lodge gate clasp together that she could persuade herself it was not all a dream.

They travelled on for some time, making such observations as the surrounding objects naturally suggested. Lady Aucherly was all spirits and vivacity, and by keeping up a chearful conversation, endeavoured to make the time pass on the road as pleasantly as

possible

[illegible] family.

Half the pleasure which Lady Aucherly anticipated to receive there, vanished at this intelligence, though she exclaimed with a smile, "*how fortunate!*"

She had not spirits to enquire how Sir Philip had learnt the news; he saved her the trouble; and producing the letter he had received, he read part of it to her: it was from Mr. Simmons, who mentioned that having had a paralytic stroke, he was ordered to Bath, and had taken lodgings on the South Parade, where he and his family then were.

Lady Aucherly recovered her presence of mind sufficiently to make some suitable observations on the occasion: she immediately perceived what had induced Sir Philip to take the journey, and as she foresaw "*Simmons and his family*" were likely to be a clog on her plans, she got out of the chaise, on their arrival in Milsom-street, with sensations very different from those she had felt on entering it.

16 CHAP-

PRIVATE BIOGRAPHY.

SIR John Aucherly, the father of Sir Philip, was generally allowed to be a most excellent character, yet his good qualities were not a little shaded by an inherent pride of ancestry and an austerity of manners; which traits were considerably strengthened by his marriage with his first cousin on the Aucherly side, a lady of a haughty and imperious disposition.

They were blessed with several children, two of which only survived, a daughter and a son — these, Sir John educated with the greatest care, and most people thought with too great a strictness, for the consequence was, his children were frequently driven to the humiliation of deceiving their father, to screen themselves from his anger.

The brother and sister being thus engaged

in

Lady A ... power with poign... willing to relinquish ... and. Sir Philip was warm in ... ments; and though he often contradicted his wife, it was more from a wish to maintain his authority, than from a premeditated desire of thwarting her inclinations.

For many years after their marriage, they lived in the utmost harmony, and partook of all the scenes in fashionable life, till Sir Philip's health made a country life requisite: at Aucherly Park he recovered; and by a strict attention to temperance and exercise, endeavoured to keep the gout at a distance.

It must not be supposed that Sir Philip had neglected his sister all this time; he had still the most lively affection for her, but as she led a very different life from Lady Aucherly, and was taken up with the care of a large family, they were not much together. Her death, which happened about five years after Sir Philip's marriage, deeply affected him, and he transferred his affection for his sister, to her daughters, who were now

broug Simmons, their au

Aucher in a delightful part of De ne, about fifteen miles from Exeter, commanding a beautiful prospect of the surrounding country, and a distant view of the sea.

There were many families of distinction within the circle of twelve miles, but their nearest neighbour of any rank was the Hon. Mr. Dorrington, whose residence, Compton Stoke, lay about three miles from Aucherly Park.

Another seat also appeared at about the same distance, which had been lately purchased by Mr. Mansell, a gentleman of great respectability. He had received a large fortune with his wife, who on that account thought she had a right to enjoy it as she pleased; and as Mr. Mansell preferred peace to the whining complaints of a silly wife, he let her have her own way, particularly as it did not much interfere with his own sources of amusement. They had no children; and as Mrs Mansell was fond of

company,

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shiona... ...ce

was very unsett... ...er more

than three months in ... ...mer at Myrtle Vale. Though Lady Aucherly had the utmost contempt for her silly neighbour, they were nevertheless a good deal together, during Mrs. Mansell's stay in the country, and as that lady was delighted with titles, she boasted every where, how intimate she was with Lady Aucherly.

The Dorringtons were very different characters, both from Lady Aucherly and Mrs. Mansell.

Mr. Dorrington had made choice of a wife, rather from the excellence of her understanding, than either beauty of person or fashionable accomplishments, though Mrs. Dorrington was by no means deficient in the one or the other.

The world was a little astonished at the match, as his alliance would have been eagerly accepted by the first families in the kingdom; but Mr. Dorrington felt he had good reason to congratulate himself on the

of
a ... family,
and a s...

Mr. Dor... ...d three daughters, whose education Mrs. Dorrington was well qualified to superintend. While the Miss Dorringtons were merely children, their mother had been contented with a governess who had been recommended to her more for her moral character than shining abilities; but as the young ladies grew older, it was desirable that they should have a governess, in whom both requisites should be united; and though the wish appeared at first almost unattainable, yet Mrs. Dorrington was fortunate enough to meet with a lady, who, in every respect, answered her most sanguine hopes.

Mrs. Lovell, a lady from Jamaica, whose husband had died in embarrassed circumstances, had returned to England, with the intention of setting up a school principally for young ladies from the West-Indies. — Her plan met with encouragement beyond her expectation, and after a few years she

found

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school … …ed
competency, bu… persons
entrusted with her pr… soon afterwards
became bankrupts.

Report had with justice given to Mrs. Lovell the character of a sensible, amiable, and accomplished woman. Mrs. Dorrington heard of her misfortunes, and understanding she was about to re-establish her school, it occurred to her, that if the situation of governess could be made an object of sufficient importance to her, there was no person in the world to whom she could entrust the education of her daughters with so much confidence. She accordingly called on Mrs. Lovell, and delicately proposed her plan; Mrs. Lovell expressed herself flattered by Mrs. Dorrington's approbation, but feared there was one obstacle to the proposal.

"And what is that?" said Mrs. Dorrington.

"I will inform you, Madam," replied Mrs. Lovell, rising; and quitting the room a few minutes, returned, leading in a lovely little girl, about ten years of age.

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circu
and mother are
both dead, but
fortunately made independent; her father left her an annuity of two hundred pounds, and appointed me her guardian, though I never saw him. But I will enter on her story another time; she has been the constant companion of all my leisure hours; her education has been a pleasure to me; and I am happy to say, that, young as she is, she has made great proficiency in various accomplishments."

This was an obstacle Mrs. Dorrington had not foreseen; and though it immediately occurred to her, that the little Emily might be received into the family with Mrs. Lovell, yet a moment's consideration suggested to her the propriety of devoting some time to reflect on the prudence and possible mischiefs attending it.

Mrs. Dorrington consulted her husband on the subject, and after mature deliberation, they agreed to take Mrs. Lovell on her own terms,

terms, and it was settled that the little orphan should reside with them.

Such, then, was the Dorrington family; and though Lady Aucherly was little less annoyed by the precise behaviour of Mrs. Dorrington, than by the fatiguing insignificance of Mrs. Mansell, she was glad of having persons of their rank so near her.

Between the children of both families, however, a greater degree of cordiality subsisted; and as Caroline Aucherly, Henrietta Dorrington, and the interesting Emily, were nearly the same age, they soon became bosom friends. William Aucherly, too, was permitted to share their amusements, and while yet a boy, Emily was his avowed favourite, and his selected companion in all their youthful sports. The seeds of affection, which had been thus early implanted in their hearts, were still alive, and William was by no means backward in letting Emily know how sincerely he loved her, and she was too artless to disavow a reciprocal attachment.

William and Caroline were now the only children of Sir Philip and Lady Aucherly. William had just left Eton, and was pursuing his studies at Oxford; and Caroline having reaped all the advantage of a French governess at home, was receiving the polish of a London school preparatory to her entrée in the beau monde. Sir Philip had been much averse to his daughter's going to a public seminary, but Mrs. St. Clair having paid a visit at Aucherly Park, accompanied by her only daughter, there appeared such a difference between the young cousins in favour of Maria St. Clair, who had been educated at one of the first schools in town, that Lady Aucherly was anxious for Caroline to have the same advantage, and at length obtained Sir Philip's consent.

Lady Aucherly had endured the insipidity of a country life for four winters, with a fortitude that astonished all who knew her; 'tis true, during that time her daughter was at home, and she took care that it should be circulated, with what solicitude Lady Aucherly watched over the tender graces of one

of the sweetest angels in the world: and again, she contrived to furnish herself with amusement, by inspecting the making of some woollen dresses which she distributed to the poor, in a severe winter: at another time, whole columns in the London papers were filled with an account of Lady Aucherly's feasting the tenantry in the Park; and even last spring she had the pleasure of presenting the Compton Volunteers with a pair of colours, said to be her own work, and her elegant, appropriate, and animated speech on the occasion, and a long description of the whole affair, appeared in the public papers: but though she was flattered by the popularity she gained in the country, yet it was a very different style of life to that she sighed for.

The Dorringtons had spent the greater part of the last winter at Compton Stoke, and had contributed very much to make it passable; but now, the Dorringtons had already left their country residence, and Lady Aucherly looked forwards with sorrow, to frequent tea parties with the Newtons,

during a long winter. She now and then thought it might be possible to prevail on Sir Philip to quit Aucherly Park for a month or two, and as the great distance made London out of the question, Bath seemed the only place to be approved; Bath would maintain its attractions all the winter; besides which, she had the excuse of its waters being recommended to Sir Philip: he, however, opposed her scheme, but on receiving a letter from his brother-in-law, it occurred to him, that he could at the same time gratify Lady Aucherly, and have the pleasure of seeing the children of his beloved sister. The Miss Simmonses had been several times on a visit at Aucherly Park, but owing to their father's ill health, it was now a long time since Sir Philip had seen them.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

BATH. — THE COLONEL'S LADY. — "MAD ROSS."

THE next morning, after Sir Philip's arrival in Bath, he wrote a note to Mr. Simmons, to apprize him of it, and Lady Aucherly added a postscript, hoping to see the young ladies soon.

This note had scarcely been dispatched half an hour, before Mr. Simmons, who was now well enough to come out, and three of his daughters, were announced. Sir Philip was friendly and affectionate. Lady Aucherly appeared delighted to see them, and made enquiries after her Bath acquaintance; but as the young ladies had not been there long, and had been at no public amusement,

they could give but a very imperfect account.

"We should like to go to the ball tonight," said Miss Catharine Simmons, "but we know no married lady to go with."

"Lady Aucherly will have no objection, I am sure," said Sir Philip, "to go to a ball."

"I'll accompany you with the greatest pleasure," added her ladyship.

The young ladies were delighted, and it was settled that they and their sisters should drink tea in Milsom-street, and proceed to the rooms with her ladyship.

At eight o'clock the Miss Simmonses were seated in Lady Aucherly's drawing-room, long before her ladyship was ready to receive them, and Sir Philip was enjoying a nap in the parlour.

"What *nice* lodgings these are," said Miss Mary Simmons.

"By far the best situation in Bath, in my opinion," said one of her sisters.

"The South Parade is so dull," said Jessy.—"And so far from the crescent," added

added Phœbe, "that I declare we seem to be quite a different sort of people."

"How gay we shall be to-night, my aunt knows so many smart people," whispered Jessy, as she heard Lady Aucherly descending the stairs, and who presently entered, kindly welcoming them with many apologies for not being ready when they came, though she was not a little chagrined that *all* her nieces should have thought proper to accept the invitation; but as they were all prepared to go, it was impossible to leave any behind.

Soon after nine, Lady Aucherly entered the upper rooms with her nieces; she soon recognized many of her old acquaintance, and two or three intimate friends, among whom was the lady of Colonel Macmaurice.

Mrs. Macmaurice was distinguished by a whimsical singularity in dress, and effrontery in her manners: she eagerly came up to Lady Aucherly, and shaking her violently by the hand, was overjoyed to see her, and wondered what miracle had released her from Aucherly Park.

"We'll talk of that to-morrow."—"To-

night,"

night," whispered Lady Aucherly, "my business is to get these young ladies partners."

"I understand you," said Mrs. Macmaurice, aloud; "the young men are so insufferably lazy, there's no getting them to dance."

"Are your sons here?"

"Not yet, the colonel had a party to dinner, but they'll all be here by and by; I see a man coming that will do for one of the ladies, I'll ask him: here, Stanhope, what, idle, my lad? you love dancing, I know, and you must dance with a friend of mine — Miss Simmons, Mr. Stanhope."

Mr. Stanhope was taken by surprize; he bowed, hesitated, and aukwardly expressed how much he felt honored; and after two of her sisters had busily tucked up her gown, he led Miss Martha Simmons to dance.

All the Miss Simmonses were extravagantly fond of dancing; and as they paraded the room in hopes of gaining partners, one of them could scarcely refrain from adding a tremulous jig to her walk, so much did

did "the Devil among the taylors" agitate her frame. In the course of the evening, four of them were lucky enough to obtain partners, which very much relieved Lady Aucherly, who began to complain terribly of the flatness of the evening, but getting near Mrs. Macmaurice at tea, she felt somewhat more at ease.

"But what could induce you to bring your *nine* nieces with you," said Mrs. Macmaurice in a loud whisper, "and to suffer them to dress in such a manner, you'll never get 'em off, if they don't dash a little?"

"We must manage better another time," said Lady Aucherly, half provoked; and to turn off the subject, enquired who were in Bath.

"Oh, all the world's here, the season was never so full — how is your daughter? Hah! here are my four boys," continued Mrs. Macmaurice, without waiting to hear how her ladyship's daughter was, "it's so long since I've seen them all together."

Lady Aucherly cast her eyes round, and beheld

beheld a group of fashionable-looking young men.

"Where's the colonel?" enquired Mrs. Macmaurice.

"He's put to bed," said one of her sons.

"And what has he got?"

"Rid of his senses."

"Very good, Jack, very good," they all exclaimed.

Lady Aucherly asked Mrs. Macmaurice, in a low tone, whether one of her sons would like to dance with Phœbe Simmons.

"Oh L—d, no," said the colonel's lady, "they're all too drunk to dance."

"What a d——'d deal of rouge you've put on to-night, Mrs. Mac," said Captain Quantreuille.

"Upon my soul, it's all my own."

"So is your wig."

"Do you want to be knock'd down, Sir?" said Mrs. Macmaurice, putting herself in a boxing posture. The young men laughed; "I'll have you broke, Sir."

"Oh, by Jove, we wont stay to be abused in this manner," said one of them, laughing

and

and dragging away his party, leaving room for others to make their bow to Mrs. Macmaurice, who soon fixed on a young man for a partner for Phœbe Simmons.

Lady Aucherly now made enquiries after all their friends.

"My sister Lethbridge and your brother are with the regiment at Bristol," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "he's got the command while the colonel's at Bath."

"My brother's such a negligent correspondent," observed Lady Aucherly, "that I'm often at a loss to know where he is.—Your sister Grosvenor is in town by this time, I suppose."

"I believe she is. L—d! look how drunk those boys are? Did I tell you that Arthur is aid-de-camp to General Stackhurst?"

"L—d! who are these people coming up to you?"

Lady Aucherly turned round her head with a graceful elevation of the chin, and beheld Mrs. Dorrington approaching with her daughters and their friend Emily O'Connor.

nor. They appeared much surprized at seeing her ladyship, and polite enquiries passed between them. They both agreed that it was a very full ball; that Bath was very full, and that it was a great relief after the sameness of the country, &c. &c.

Mrs. Macmaurice stared at the party during this dialogue; and Mrs. Dorrington, perceiving Lady Aucherly was with strangers, passed on.

"Who are those people?" repeated Mrs. Macmaurice.

"The Honourable Mrs. Dorrington and her daughters."

"What a tame set; don't they live near you?"

"Yes, at Compton Stoke."

"They seem pretty looking stupid dolls, and the mother moved as if she went on wheels."

"You have the strangest conceits," drawled Lady Aucherly; "but what can I do," continued she, in a whisper, "for my nieces? Mary has observed twenty times, what a sweet tune this is."

"Never

"Never despair," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "I have been keeping a sharp look out this half hour, for all the meek-eyed fellows of my acquaintance, but I can't see one; stop, here's one coming this way; observe him now; you may know them in an instant; he doesn't hold up his head, and he looks good-tempered — no devil in him."

Lady Aucherly smiled with the consciousness of possessing discrimination infinitely superior to her dashing companion.

"Here, Myers," continued Mrs. Macmaurice, "you are looking out for a partner, I know."

"Ma'am!"

"Let me introduce you to a friend of mine."

Mr. Myers was entrapped, and the delighted Mary joined the dance.

"You've only three now left, have you?" said Mrs. Macmaurice; "try what another turn will do, and I will stay here and collect some men about me, and as you return I'll face about, and you shall see the result."

"Oh, but indeed we should not like —"

"Pooh,

"Pooh, pooh, nonsense, leave me to manage it."

Lady Aucherly yielded to necessity, and sauntered up the room with her three disconsolate nieces, who began to entertain strong suspicions, that as the evening was far advanced, they should return home without having danced at all.

Mrs. Macmaurice soon drew a party of young men about her, and enquired whether they had been yet introduced to Lady Aucherly. "Whom do you mean?" said one. "L—d! what a question, the celebrated Lady Aucherly, to be sure, the great beauty; her brother married my sister, she is but just come to Bath, and will be the fashion here this winter; she intends giving a superb ball; you must be introduced." At this instant Lady Aucherly passed, and Mrs. Macmaurice continued; "there, that's Lady Aucherly;" and making her ladyship stop, introduced Mr. Galbraith to her, and as rapidly the rest of the party shared the same honour.

Lady Aucherly now felt her spirits returning,

ing, and as she engaged the young men by turns in conversation, which she had always at command, Mrs. Macmaurice found opportunities of dropping hints to them to ask the nieces to dance: this was done in such a manner as to ensure success, and the nine fortunate Miss Simmonses actually got partners, while Mrs. Macmaurice, triumphing in her address, paraded the room with Lady Aucherly, who now assumed all the consequence of her rank and beauty, and excited universal admiration.

"Do look at mad Ross," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "he has not taken his eyes off you this half hour."

"And who is mad Ross?" said Lady Aucherly, turning her head to observe him: she perceived a young man with a contemplative, interesting countenance, his arms folded, and leaning against the wall, who, with fixed attention, was watching her: but he appeared to be a person of no fashion, no importance; and the circumstance no otherwise gratified Lady Aucherly than as it declared the undisguised homage of a person,

superior

superior to the design of flattery, and as such an unequivocal proof of her unrivalled attraction.

"I can't tell you who he is," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "but I'm told he's one of the strangest beings living; he makes nothing of speaking to persons he does not know, whoever they may be. He ask'd me one day if I had ever heard of such a word as modesty. I had never seen the fellow's face before in all my life, and was going to row him for his impertinence, but some officers with me burst out laughing, and told me I must not mind what mad Ross said; but that if I felt affronted, they would call him out. "The L—d forbid," said I; "the fellow's not worth your notice, though I've since heard he is a gentleman: but he says and does so many strange things, that in Bath he has got the name of mad Ross, and since he's become a character, people never mind what liberties he takes, and instead of being angry, they enjoy a laugh at him.— Oh! here are your quizzical friends; I know they're coming to wish you good night with

their wide smiling mouths, and I declare mad Ross has joined them; there, make haste and be civil to them, in as few words as possible."

"Are you going so soon?" said Lady Aucherly to Mrs. Dorrington.

"Yes, for we find the heat so very oppressive; we are in the Crescent," continued Mrs. Dorrington, "No. 4, where I hope to have the pleasure of seeing your ladyship."

"Oh, I hope we shall meet often," said Lady Aucherly; and yielding to the impatient jogs of Mrs. Macmaurice, quitted Mrs. Dorrington rather abruptly.

"Law! Lady Aucherly!" cried Mrs. Mansell, who had been at cards great part of the evening, "I'm so glad you're come, it's so pleasant to meet people here one knows,—and I'm sure I little dreamt to meet your ladyship."

"Bath is a place," replied Lady Aucherly, "where we are always sure to meet with a great many of our acquaintance."

"Yes,

"Yes, but then some how, I mean such an intimate friend as your ladyship."

"True," said Lady Aucherly, with a sneer.

Mrs. Macmaurice was infinitely diverted with the face, figure, dress, and phraseology of Mrs. Mansell, and declared she would court her acquaintance, in order to have fun with her among the officers.

Mrs. Macmaurice was one of the three co-heiresses of Mr. Rodbard, the rich banker, and at fifteen ran off with Captain Macmaurice, from a boarding-school near London: he was the son of an Irish gentleman, of good family, but small fortune; and having contracted many large gaming debts, Miss Rodbard's fifty thousand pounds was an object worth trying for; he attempted, and succeeded.

When Mrs. Macmaurice's sisters left school, her house was their residence, and her quarters theirs: they were of course introduced to a large military acquaintance, and the Miss Rodbards, or their fortunes, immediately became the objects of adoration

of

of all the officers in Captain Macmaurice's regiment.

The young ladies, however, disappointed them all, for Louisa was captivated with the person and manners of George Lethbridge, Lady Aucherly's brother, who was then only a cornet in another regiment, but who afterwards, with the help of his wife's fortune, purchased rank, and at length became major in the same regiment, of which Macmaurice was now lieutenant-colonel: Isabella, the youngest of the sisters, was not partial to the unsettled life of an officer's wife, and accepting the addresses of Mr. Grosvenor, a rich West Indian, commenced her reign among the higher circles.

When Mrs. Lethbridge was married, Lady Aucherly was in the full enjoyment of her celebrity; her brother's marriage, of course, introduced Mrs. Macmaurice to her, and though their dispositions and characters were very different, a love of pleasure attached them to each other.

CHAPTER IV.

EMILY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the gratifying admiration Lady Aucherly had excited at the ball, she returned home much dissatisfied with the evening: she was provoked at being obliged to take all her nieces with her; and though she began to consider that if she treated them in every respect agreeably to Sir Philip's wishes, she might probably be able to have more of her own way, yet still the price was dear.

She felt vexed too, that she had received the Dorringtons so coolly; she did not remember even to have spoken to Emily, but she tried to persuade herself, that she had bestowed upon her a smiling nod, while she was speaking to Mrs. Dorrington.

She could not help feeling conscious that her rude behaviour was occasioned by a fear of Mrs. Macmaurice's raillery, and was angry with herself that she had not been superior to such influence. Mrs. Macmaurice's manners, she perceived, were become bolder since she had last seen her; and though she had always been a good-humoured woman with volatile spirits, and was still acknowledged to be the best tempered soul in the world, yet there now appeared an open defiance of decorum in her conduct, which Lady Aucherly could not approve.

The next morning Lady Aucherly was interrupted at her toilet by a visit from Mrs. Macmaurice.

"What, are you up? I did not expect to find you dressing in the grey of the morning."

"Oh," replied Lady Aucherly, "we country people are accustomed to early hours; I have been up since ten."

"L—d, I am but just out of bed, and I came here to breakfast with you."

"But I can't help thinking of your *nine* nieces; where are they all pack'd?"

"They lodge on the South parade ——."

"What a moping place — L — d! that Mrs. Dorrington; was there ever such a — Who is she, in the name of wonder?"

"She was a Miss — a Miss ——."

"Ah! no matter what — can I have another roll?"

"She was a Miss Blake," said Lady Aucherly, ringing the bell.

"And now I am as wise as ever; where d'ye get these rolls?"

"Her father," continued Lady Aucherly, "was a physician of eminence in Edinburgh, and Mr. Dorrington, you know, is a son of Lord Dorrington, and was lately returned member for ——."

"But who were the dolls?"

"Her three daughters, and a Miss O'Connor — Emily O'Connor."

"And who is Emily O'Connor?"

"A relation, I believe, of Miss Dorrington's governess; but there appears to be

some mystery about her, I've never made any direct enquiry."

"L—d! and which was Miss O'Connor?"

"The pretty delicate girl, with light hair and blue eyes."

"Ah, frightful!"

"I assure you," said Lady Aucherly, "she was much admired last night."

"I believe the men did stare at her; but hasn't she sandy eye-lashes?"

"No, her lashes and eye-brows are dark, and give much expression to her features."

"With all *my* heart; but now I want to talk to you about a party I am going to give: our regiment, you know, is at Bristol;—we've a whole house at Clifton, and I've been here a week beating up for recruits; I can't endure a small party."

"I should like to spend a day or two at Clifton," said Lady Aucherly, "while Mrs. St. Clair is there."

"Well, that is what I was coming to, the day is not fixed yet, and I was going to pro-

pose deferring my dance till you come to Clifton."

"I'll speak to Sir Philip about it to-day; and if I can fix a time, I'll let you know this evening."

"So do; and mind you must bring all your nieces."

"Indeed you must excuse me."

"No, but I won't I'll speak to Sir Philip about it, if you say a word against it — so good morning, and thank ye for my breakfast."

Mrs. Macmaurice did not meet the colonel and her sons till dinner time. "Well, Jack," said she, "how did you like Lady Aucherly?"

"Oh, she's quite a Venus."

"I thought her a fine figure," observed Hastings, "but very affected."

"She opened her eyes upon me," said John, "with such hauteur, that I had a great mind to say bo! to her."

"When I first saw her," said the colonel, "I thought her the most beautiful woman I had ever beheld."

"Thank

"Thank ye," cried his wife.

"The present company, you know,"— said Hastings.

"Not excepted, in this case," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "but whom did you dance with?"

"I only danced one dance with your adjutant's lady, Mrs. Chetham."

"Hah—a pleasant woman, but shockingly plain."

"Who are the beauties here now?" enquired the colonel.

"Oh, the Miss Townleys bear the bell, I believe," said Captain Macmaurice; "but, in my opinion, the sweetest girl in the room was a Miss O'Connor."

"O'Connor!" repeated the colonel, with an inquisitive look.

"Ah, I saw her," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "but I didn't think much of her."

"Whom was she with?" said the colonel.

"L—d, I forget now, but Lady Aucherly told me— Mrs. Somebody ——."

"Was it Dorrington?" said the colonel, affecting indifference ——.

 "Oh,

"Oh, so 'twas; but how came you to know."

"By mere accident."

"L—d, how odd," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "have you ever seen her?"

"Never—no, I know nothing of her.—Did Lewis bring any answer from the general's?" enquired Colonel Macmaurice, to change the subject. "What a curse it is to have stupid servants," added he, violently ringing the bell.

A servant entered.

"What answer did you bring from my Lord Athorpe and the general? you always forget messages."

"His lordship will send an answer, Sir; the general was out."

"Did Sam take my curricle to Stone's," enquired Hastings; "when can I have it?"

"Don't you hear the bell?" said Colonel Macmaurice; "go and see if it's Lord Athorpe's servant."

"If he does not send me an answer to-night," said the colonel, leaning back in his chair, and throwing a glass of wine down his throat,

throat, " I will positively return to Bristol to-morrow morning. Well, Sir?" said the colonel, on the servant's re-entering.

" 'Twas Lady Aucherly's servant, Sir, with this note for my mistress."

" Well," said Mrs. Macmaurice, when she had read it, " my dance then is fixed for Friday."

" Now you're happy, I hope," said the colonel.

" Friday," said Hastings. " Well, I stay till then, but I must be at Exeter by the 24th."

Lady Aucherly had communicated to Sir Philip as much of Mrs. Macmaurice's intended party as she thought proper; and as two of the Miss Simmonses dined with them, and often observed what a good-tempered pleasant woman Mrs. Macmaurice was, Sir Philip began to give the subject consideration; for he could hardly believe at first, that Lady Aucherly should no sooner be in Bath than she wanted to go to Clifton, and he thought Mrs. St. Clair might as well come to see them; but on finding that

Mrs. Macmaurice had actually made it a point for Lady Aucherly to bring all her nieces, it considerably altered the case; and after wondering how they could like to go twelve miles to a ball, he wished them all the pleasure promised them by it; and there being no engagement in view, a day was immediately fixed, and a note dispatched to Mrs. Macmaurice.

By degrees, Sir Philip became completely reconciled to the change from the country; and as he met with many old acquaintances, he passed much of his time with them: Lady Aucherly took her nieces by turns with her to the amusements at Bath, and on Thursday morning set out for Clifton, Mrs. St. Clair having previously engaged lodgings for them near her own, in Prince's-buildings.

Lady Aucherly had not seen her sister for nearly a twelvemonth; the meeting was highly gratifying to both, and her ladyship was rejoiced to find Maria St. Clair so much recovered, Clifton having been recommended to her for change of air.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION.

MRS. MACMAURICE's ball was much talked of at Bath, and Mrs. Mansell dining at the Dorringtons, enquired whether they were to be at it.

"We have not the honor of Mrs. Macmaurice's acquaintance," said Mrs. Dorrington.

"Law! I wonder at that," replied Mrs. Mansell; "for as you know Lady Aucherly so well, and she being a sister, like, to Mrs. Macmaurice, I should have thought ——."

"In truth," interrupted Mrs. Dorrington, "I would not desire the acquaintance, and I am astonished that Lady Aucherly should be so intimate with her, for in my opinion, she seems by no means a well-bred woman."

 "She

"She is at any rate a great oddity," said Mr. Mansell.

"The colonel, too, they say, is a strange man," rejoined Mrs. Dorrington.

"I haven't seen him; I believe he's with his regiment at Bristol now."

"I hear he is a very dissipated character," said Mrs. Dorrington.

"I fancy so," replied Mrs. Mansell; "now he doesn't come much into ladies' parties, but keeps men company, all drinking like."

"Mrs. Macmaurice's manners are free in the extreme," said Mr. Mansell; "but allowances must be made for the company she sees."

"If Lady Aucherly continue her intimacy with her, it will be a very unfortunate acquaintance for Caroline," said Mrs. Dorrington, "for she is really a most sweet girl."

"What age is she?" enquired a young man, who had been listening to the conversation with an absent countenance.

"Nearly seventeen, Mr. Ross," replied Mrs. Dorrington, "about the age of my youngest daughter, and they were great friends

friends before Miss Aucherly went to school."

"What, is she at school?" observed Mr. Ross, with some surprize.

"She is," answered Mrs. Dorrington; "Lady Aucherly and I differ much on the subject of education: but perhaps it may be for Caroline's advantage; for her governess was far from being a well-informed woman, though she managed to give Miss Aucherly several very desirable accomplishments: in French and drawing she particularly excels, and with the assistance of London masters, I dare say she is by this time perfect in music, and I should hope the more important accomplishments of the mind have not been neglected."

"They are more important ones indeed," said Mr. Mansell; "and if women in general, knew the value of them better, there would not be so many plain unmarried ladies with all accomplishments, but those of the understanding."

"But then the beautiful might derive the same advantage," said Miss Dorrington, "so

"so that I fear, plain women would still be only considered as *second best.*"

"You're right," returned Mr. Mansell; "but still I think, were the experiment tried, the plain ladies would succeed, because they would know it entirely depended on their mental acquirements, and would of course be more persevering than beauties who had other charms to rely on."

"Your observations are very just," said Mrs. Dorrington, and Mrs. Lovell not being in the room, added, "I consider myself as peculiarly fortunate in having found an excellent woman as the friend and instructress of my children; for in Mrs. Lovell are united all the elegant accomplishments which attract the eye, while her mind is stored with every branch of useful knowledge, to which she adds the polished manners of a gentlewoman."

"You have indeed a treasure then," said Mr. Mansell.

"We consider her as such; and my daughters are not a little indebted," continued Mrs. Dorrington, turning to Miss O'Connor with a smile, "to our young friend

friend Emily, whose early proficiency inspired them with a laudable emulation."

"Is Miss O'Connor," enquired Mrs. Mansell, in a low tone of voice, "Mrs. Lovell's niece?"

"She is not a near relation," replied Mrs. Dorrington; and after a short pause continued, "Miss Aucherly's governess was a woman who did not sufficiently respect herself, to make herself respectable."

"Ah!" said Mr. Mansell, "that's a great point."

"What I mean," rejoined Mrs. Dorrington, "is, that she never felt those slights and neglects, not to say rudenesses, which I have often witnessed with pain. I have heard Lady Aucherly order Mademoiselle Fontaine to fetch her shawl in the same tone, as she would use to her woman."

"Yes, sure," interrupted Mrs. Mansell; "and when I've been there, she has been ordered about, with not so much as 'be so good,' or 'I'll trouble you,' or "shall I trouble you,' or any thing to soften it, like."

"Lady Aucherly is noted too," said Emily, "for

"for great suavity of manners, and in general speaks with kindness to her servants and dependants."

"Yes," said Mr. Mansell; "but I fancy, while Mademoiselle Fontaine was at Aucherly Park, she had not the most comfortable situation she could wish."

"She was not to sit at table," added Henrietta Dorrington, "when there was any company; and even when they were alone, she rose like clock work, five minutes after the cloth was removed, and retired."

"And then called for to make tea," said Mrs. Mansell.

"But if tea were made out of the room," observed Henrietta, "you saw nothing more of Mademoiselle."

"Now a person," said Mrs. Dorrington, "who could submit to such humiliation, must inspire her pupil with very little respect, and of course could not command much attention."

"It's an aukward thing too," said Mr. Mansell, "to draw a line of conduct, in this matter; for though you may feel per-

fectly satisfied with having your governess dine at table with company, yet perhaps it might not be altogether so pleasant either to her, or some of your guests; one would be asking to help her to this, another to take wine with her, in order to let her see she was not neglected, while she might feel every attention of the kind an insult, so that I really believe there are many people, who object to have their governesses at table merely out of delicacy."

"True," said Mrs. Dorrington; "but do you not perceive from whence the objection springs; it is from the choice of a governess. I am certain, were all governesses like Mrs. Lovell, there never could have been an objection formed to their making part of any company. Suppose she were my sister, and chose to take on her the instruction of my children, would she be the less respected? far otherwise; it is then, because there are so many ignorant and ill-bred; and why are there so many of that description? The answer is obvious; because the office is attended with so many humiliating circum-

stances.

stances. I am convinced, that were governesses treated more generally with proper respect, many well-informed, accomplished women, in reduced circumstances, would be glad of the situation; but they are deterred, by the known sacrifices they must make; for they are aware they must immediately relinquish the rank they have before supported, and instead of being considered as gentlewomen, they must be content to be treated as upper servants."

"A change is certainly to be wished for."

"It is, indeed," resumed Mrs. Dorrington; "but when once a system has obtained, it is no easy matter to new-model it. Is it not surprising," continued Mrs. Dorrington, "that people should consider, as unfit companions, those very persons to whom they entrust the education of their children?"

"I have never observed that," said Mr. Mansell, "except with regard to company."

"It was so at Aucherly Park," continued Mrs. Dorrington; "while Caroline was a child, she was permitted to sit with Mademoiselle Fontaine when Lady Aucherly went

out;

out; yet when she grew older, but was still considered too young to go into company, Mademoiselle was not thought a fit companion for her, and she was then sent to a London school, where her cousin Miss St. Clair had been."

"Ah! I hear Miss St. Clair is *very* clever," said Mrs. Mansell; "I have always been away, when she has been at Aucherly Park — Is she pretty?"

"Indeed I think so," replied Mrs. Dorrington; "she has very good features; but she wants colour; her health, I fear, is delicate."

"She has beautiful eyes," said Emily; "but there is a peculiarity in her countenance owing to her eye-brows being so near together, which gives rather a frown; but she is very good tempered."

"And very sensible," added Mrs. Dorrington; "but she is inclined to be satirical, which is far from being a pleasing trait."

"I heard of an officer," said Henrietta, "not quite such a scholar as Miss St. Clair expects all gentlemen to be, who was so confused

fused by a look she gave, on his appearing ignorant of some author she quoted, that he took the first opportunity of stealing off, and has never ventured to enter into conversation with her since."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Mansell, "I've heard she can be very rude that way."

"But it is not from ill nature," said Emily.

"I believe not," observed Mrs. Dorrington.

"She can be very agreeable *when she chuses*," said Lucy; "but she certainly is very satirical."

"It is a very dangerous talent to indulge," remarked her mother: "but as she grows older, I dare say she will see the impropriety of it."

Mr. Ross had been much struck with the beauty and graceful figure of Lady Aucherly, and upon hearing she had a daughter, felt a romantic interest about her.

He had been conjuring up in his mind's eye, a lovely angelic form, such as he supposed Lady Aucherly's daughter must be, and

and not having attended to the discussion of Miss St. Clair's merits, and presuming the beautiful Caroline was still the subject of the conversation, he enquired rather abruptly, when Miss Aucherly was to come out.

"Upon my word, Mr. Ross," replied Mrs. Dorrington, "I am not informed when that important event is to take place."

"Young ladies differ so much," said Mr. Mansell, "that I believe there's no precise age fixed for their making their appearance, and it depends, in a great measure, I suppose, on their own qualifications."

"I consider what is termed coming out," said Mrs. Dorrington, "as extremely degrading, for it is, in other words, coming to the market of matrimony; and many an anxious mother is as keen as the most experienced trader, and calculates, with as much discernment, the fittest time for her daughter's *entrée*; and the young ladies, having served a kind of apprenticeship to fashion, are at length informed they are to come out, and their exhibition is then ushered into the world like a new play, with all the decoration and art of which the manager so

well

well knows the importance: there is but one step farther, and that is, instead of their being disposed of by private contract, they might be advertised by public auction."

"What you have observed," said Mr. Mansell, interrupting a laugh, which Mrs. Dorrington's concluding remarks had excited, "may be justly applied to many fashionable pennyless beauties; but I am convinced there are many, who would shrink from coming out in the manner you have described, who still do not hold the opinion of the world in such contempt, as not to conform to prevailing customs: young ladies, therefore, do not in general appear in public, till they exhibit themselves as women in manners, as well as person."

"Aye," rejoined Mrs. Dorrington, "but many have the manners of women so young, that they require no keeping back on that account: and it is the same with the young men, you see boys appear like little men; their dress, manners, and pursuits, are the same.' The world is very much altered from what it was, when I was young," continued Mrs. Dorrington, "but I'm not such a bigot

to

to my principles, as to decide it is for the worse."

"Then I suppose," said Mrs. Mansell, lowering her voice, and not appearing to have attended to the last remark, "the Miss Dorringtons have had no regular coming out-like."

"My daughters have been educated under my own eye, Mrs. Mansell: they have seen very little of the world, but I have no idea of immuring them in the country, though I prefer it myself; and we intend joining Mr. Dorrington in London next month. As for their coming out, I think young ladies should be introduced into company when their understandings are sufficiently cultivated to receive instruction and entertainment from sensible people."

"Law! but people don't go to plays and concerts to talk all sensible like," said Mrs. Mansell, looking round for applause.

"Not always," returned Mrs. Dorrington, with a smile.

One of the party making some observation on the last concert, the conversation turned

on

on music, and as a grand piano forte stood at the bottom of the room, the young ladies were solicited to play, and Mr. Mansell being an excellent performer on the violoncello, the evening concluded with a concert, much to the satisfaction of all parties, except Mrs. Mansell, who, not having a good ear, and languishing for cards, was not a little inclined to close her eyes.

"This is better music than you will have at Mrs. Macmaurice's," said Mr. Mansell to his wife, at the conclusion of the Eighth of Corelli.

"Law! you know, my dear," replied she, "it's quite a different sort of thing, you know."

"Granted," said Mr. Mansell.

"Should not you like to go to Mrs. Macmaurice's," said Mrs. Mansell, in a whisper, to the young ladies.

"I dare say it will be very pleasant," said Miss Dorrington, "but we are not acquainted with Mrs. Macmaurice."

"Ah! that's a pity."

"I must confess I should like to go vastly."

vastly," said Emily, "we hear so much of it."

A continuation of the music was now proposed, but Mrs. Mansell, making a pretended excuse of the late hours she should be obliged to keep the next night, requested her carriage might be called, and took leave.

Mrs. Mansell and Mrs. Dorrington were certainly not assimilating characters, but, being country neighbours, and Mr. Mansell a sensible man, and very musical, the weakness of her capacity was overlooked for the sake of his society. As an excuse for his marrying her, it must be observed that he was very young at the time, and she had a pretty face, and a large fortune in expectation.

Mr. Ross was of a good family in Scotland, and distantly related to Mrs. Dorrington; he had received a liberal education, and had at different times followed several professions; but being an eccentric character, he at length determined to be content with a small independency, and enjoy literary leisure.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. MACMAURICE'S BALL.

THE preparations for the dance at Duncan House were now complete; Mrs. Macmaurice's only care, however, had been to crowd her rooms: on her housekeeper and butler devolved all the trouble of providing for the entertainment.

When Lady Aucherly was dressed, she found the Miss Simmonses had been ready a considerable time; but as she perceived that five of them had not followed some of her suggestions, and were not dressed with that intrinsic neatness which she had recommended, they were detained some time longer.

As Lady Aucherly entered the room, her figure and beauty attracted every eye, while Miss St. Clair whispered to her mother,—"Doesn't my aunt, with her brood, look like a hen and chickens?"

"With what excellent temper she supports it," said Mrs. St. Clair, "for I know so well what she must feel."

Mrs. Macmaurice welcomed Lady Aucherly with a scolding for coming so late, adding, as they approached Mrs. St. Clair, "your sister's been here this half hour—Maria, are you engaged?"

Miss St. Clair declined the first dance.

"Ah, that's shabby," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "you'd better dance; 'twill give you a colour—or you'll find rouge on my dressing-table."

"That's a stranger to my toilet," returned Maria, sneeringly.

"L—d, you vain thing, you look shocking pale, and for all the world like a statue: I'll tell ye a trick I know many do, take a piece of scarlet cloth and rub your cheeks; but

that's thrown away on one vain enough to go without rouge; I know if I were, 'twould save twenty pounds a-year to my pocket—oh, how lovely black hair looks on a rouged cheek!"

"The colonel has not made his appearance yet, has he?" enquired Lady Aucherly.

"Oh, Mac dined at the Mess to-day,—they'll all be here soon; I charged them not to come drunk, 'twould make all the other men look so stupid, you know."

"You think, then," said Miss St. Clair, "that men, *with* their reason, would appear fools by those with none?"

"Pshaw, you know what I mean—here's Captain Pytt, with his new wife—how d'ye do? where's your sister?"

"She's coming with the general's lady, and——"

"Mrs. Stackhurst is always late—it's past ten now, and I want to begin—I am to lead off my new dance with Major Bloodthorpe, he's in one of the militias here; I was only introduced to him yesterday—here's Collier

of

of our's," continued Mrs. Macmaurice, turning to Lady Aucherly, "I'll get him to dance with Jessy Simmons, and Horace Pitt shall dance with Phœbe. I've seven officers of our regiment entirely under my control, they don't dare do a thing without consulting me; they're not all here now, but I can manage for all that."

Mrs. Macmaurice was as good as her word, and presently procured partners for all the Miss Simmonses, and then led off with "Mrs. Macmaurice's Rant."

The company, by this time, were nearly all arrived, and Mrs. Mansell among the rest, who, not knowing many in the room, pushed herself into Lady Aucherly's party, and as half a dozen officers entered, exclaimed, "Law, here's all sweet blue and silver; isn't this Mrs. Macmaurice's regiment? Law, who is that tall one?"

"Don't you know—it's the colonel," said Lady Aucherly.

"What a terrible looking man—law, I'm quite frighten'd; his eyes are so dark and glaring, like a giant's."

"He's considered a very fine man."

"So he is, to be sure; but law, to me now, he looks as if he were in some character on the stage: like Pizzaro, now, or Bajazet, or ——"

Colonel Macmaurice now approached.—His features softened as he spoke to Lady Aucherly, and after stopping a few minutes, he passed on to other company.

"Law, how terrified I was when he came up to you," said Mrs. Mansell, giggling—"he didn't look so fierce—somehow: but isn't he very proud?"

"I never perceived it," said Lady Aucherly; "it's only his manner; observe him now with Mrs. Chetham, his reserve is all laid aside, and he appears in good spirits."

"Well now, to me," said Mrs. Mansell, "it seems all forced—and there's a kind of absence like, in his manner, as if nothing interested him."

"You should see him at play, then," observed Mrs. Stackhurst, "and you'll not find that fault with him."

"Ah!

"Ah! what all gaming-like: that's a pity—but what a great figure he is, and the sons just like him, and she calls them boys—look at that one now, he is not more than eighteen, and he looks five-and-twenty, with whiskers and all. Law, look at Mrs. Macmaurice, how she jigs it about; I declare it's a pretty tune; but d'ye think she made it?"

"Indeed I don't know," said Lady Aucherly, in a tone intended to silence further questions.

"Law!" exclaimed Mrs. Mansell, "look at him now; see how he moves with a kind of supernatural dignity like; where is he going out at that door?"

The colonel proceeded to the card-room, where he remained the greater part of the evening.

"Well, how d'ye like my dance?" said Mrs. Macmaurice, coming to Lady Aucherly out of breath.

"It's vastly pretty," said Mrs. Mansell.

"I'm glad you like it.—Lady Aucherly,

 why

why don't you dance? Ah, here's Lethbridge; come, major, persuade your sister to dance."

"Can you expect her to dance," said Major Lethbridge, "with *nine* nieces to look after? How could you think of bringing them all here," continued he, turning to his sister.

"We must bow to necessity," replied Lady Aucherly, "for their father insists that neither of them shall stay at home on *his* account; and Sir Philip is so partial to them, and they are all so fond of dancing, that it would be difficult to determine which should stay at home. Miss Simmons," continued her ladyship, "has the plea of seniority in her favour."

"And the next dances so well," said the major, ironically.

"And what the deuse can you say for the rest, in the name of rudeness," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "yet they're all good-looking girls, and I'm glad to see 'em better dressed than they were at the Bath ball; you were

not

not there, major; but upon my life and soul 'twas too bad—by way of Grecian tétes, they had large cockades of hair stuck at the back of their heads, and I *actually* passed a dish of tea through one of the bows to the brigade major."

"That's a very good story of yours," said Lethbridge.

"Ah! I see you don't believe it; but you believe nothing," replied Mrs. Macmaurice, "and you'll go to Old Nick."

"I suspect Lady Aucherly gave 'em a hint or two to-night," observed Mrs. Mansell.

"This party would have rubb'd off some of the Dorringtons' formality," said Lady Aucherly, to give a turn to the conversation.

"By the L—d! I wish they were here," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "I'd row 'em out of their starch; I'd set the officers at 'em."

"By the way," said Mrs. Mansell, "I dined at Mrs. Dorrington's yesterday, and the young ladies were longing, I could see, to come, and we had such a stupid evening

of it, there was no thought of cards, so 'twas all sentimental-like—about education, and good governesses and bad governesses, and how to bring up children; I dreaded every minute, lest they should propose reading Miss More's Strictures, for it lay on the table."

"Mrs. Dorrington," said Lady Aucherly, "thinks it a libel on the understanding to propose cards in a small party."

"Well, but I've been there," said Mrs. Mansell, "when they've had no body else, and we've had cards."

"Very likely," said Miss St. Clair, looking archly at Major Lethbridge.

"Now, for my part," continued Mrs. Mansell, while her auditors were preparing to ridicule her silly remarks, "I think one wants cards more in a small party of friends than in a large company; for after you have said what you think of the weather, and told all the news of deaths and marriages, why what have you got more to say; for you know all their family and all about 'em, but in a large company, there are generally some strangers

strangers like — and then one can ask where they live, and a thousand things; but to go talking about education, when we're all grown up people, what could be more tiresome; I know I was weary enough of tasks when I was at school: so I can't bear to hear any thing about learning now."

"It must indeed have been an irksome evening to you," said Miss St. Clair.

"Oh, shocking," continued Mrs. Mansell; "and then they got to their music, and Miss O'Connor was asked to sing; so we had 'Angels ever bright and fair:' then there was 'O Nanny,' and 'Oh Lady Fair,' and Mr. Ross accompanying them on the flute, and all —"

"What, was Mad Ross there?" said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Oh yes, sure, and he took a part like in some of the songs, but law, they almost put me to sleep; I felt my eyes closing and closing, so I went as soon as I could."

"You are not fond of music, then," said Miss St. Clair, "or you must have been delighted to have heard them."

"So Mr. Mansell says, but I don't know —I'm very fond of music too, but somehow 'twas all such *sawny* music—for me now, I'd rather hear a march, or 'Miss Bailey,' or any funny song. Law! is that Mrs. Townsend, with those beautiful diamond ear-rings?"

"I don't admire them," said Mrs. Stackhurst; "they are too long and heavy."

"I pity her ears," observed Miss St. Clair; "if they could speak, I'm sure they would complain bitterly of their burthen."

"If they could only whisper," said Major Lethbridge, "they'd stand a good chance of being heard."

"But I much question," returned Miss St. Clair, "whether the most feeling petition would insure attention."

"True, the lady might not relish having her ears *bored* with impertinent remonstrances."

"Very good, major," said Miss St. Clair, laughing: "but joking apart, it's a most absurd, savage fashion."

"Aren't your ears bored then?" asked Mrs. Mansell.

"When

"When I was too young to judge for myself, they were; but I never wear ear-rings, and the puncture is now closed up."

"Law, that's a pity!"

"There are other places more proper for ornaments," said Miss St. Clair; "the practice of mutilating the ear to accommodate a gem, is, I think, one of the most barbarous customs tolerated among civilized people."

"Well," said Mrs. Mansell; "for my part, I think ear-rings very becoming."

"You are fond of jewels," observed Lady Aucherly.

"If I have a passion, it is for diamonds," said Mrs. Mansell, half joking.

"What a providence it is," said Miss St. Clair, sneeringly, "that the gratification of it is so completely in your power."

"I have very good diamonds," returned Mrs. Mansell; "and it's almost the only things one can wear now-a-days to distinguish one."

"Ornaments do certainly very much embellish the *person*," said Miss St. Clair,

"and

"and it is a great misfortune that the *mind* cannot partake of the same advantage."

"That lady has nice diamonds," said Mrs. Mansell, looking at a lady who sat on the opposite side of the room; "how sweet they glitter — do tell us, Mrs. Macmaurice, who she is."

"She's a Bristol lady; there are several of them here; they called on me, and we've dined with them, and had turtle."

"And we come in for all the Corporation dinners," said Major Lethbridge.

"Some of them live here at Clifton," continued Mrs. Macmaurice; "that's a Mrs. Fuller, and just now she asked me if she might see the supper before the company sat down. L—d, Ma'am," said I, "there's no finery to see; there's cold meat for the men, soups for the married ladies, and puffs and whips for the girls; you can't think how disappointed she look'd."

"And haven't you any jelly and blanc mange?" said Mrs. Mansell.

"L—d, I don't know what there is," said

Mrs.

Mrs. Macmaurice, "but she expected to see Temples and Bridges, and all that sort of fuss — and there's another Bristol lady."

"Law, and she's got diamonds too," said Mrs. Mansell; "but Mrs. Fuller's necklace for me — it's very like one my cousin Lady Westerna has got."

"Oh, they're very rich," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "and then they set up for country ladies, and their husbands grow fat and gouty."

"We have been extremely fortunate," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "in being introduced to some families here, of most elegant manners."

"There are very few with any spirit," said Mrs. Macmaurice, walking away with Mrs. St. Clair and Major Lethbridge, who were going to cards.

"By comparison," said Miss St. Clair, while her eye followed Mrs. Macmaurice with a satirical glance, "there are very few any where."

Charles Macmaurice came up to Miss St. Clair, and observing she wore the miniature

of

of her father in his uniform, said it made a sailor presumptuous enough to solicit the honour of her hand.

Maria, with great sweetness, replied, "we'll leave it to our enemies to call our Navy presumptuous."

"I trust we shall prove victorious, as well as daring," said Charles.

"Brave men generally are," replied Miss St. Clair, as he led her to the dance.

"What do you think of that," said Mrs. Mansell, turning to Lady Aucherly; "isn't there a little flirtation like going on?"

"Nothing serious, I believe, though I've no doubt you are firmly persuaded 'twill be a match."

"Why, somehow — I thought she smiled so; and she doesn't often, you know; she's an odd creature — do you know, I don't quite understand what she means sometimes."

Lady Aucherly smiled.

Mrs. Mansell eagerly added, "I mean I can't tell when she's in joke or in earnest."

"Be assured," said her ladyship, "when she seems ill-natured, she's in jest; and when

she

she appears your friend, she is thoroughly in earnest."

"Law!" exclaimed Mrs. Mansell, "and then sometimes she speaks all so clever, like — she dances well, doesn't she? but seems to want life, somehow."

Maria's figure was elegant, and her manners were graceful and prepossessing; 'tis true, she was often severe on those whose uncultivated minds exposed them to ridicule, yet her easy flow of language and ready wit rendered her conversation highly fascinating.

Her father had been very fortunate in taking several valuable prizes, but having received a wound in an engagement, he returned home; a decline followed his illness, and he died at the Hotwells, leaving a very large property between his widow and only child. This independence was perhaps a disadvantage to Maria; it made her careless of the world's opinion, and being pretty well assured of her own mental superiority, she made no scruple of indulging her satire,

without considering how far it was likely to create enemies.

People of small fortune are habitually so cautious of giving offence, that many a witty remark has been suppressed, owing to an indecision, whether it might be spoken without giving umbrage. A rich man, on the contrary, hazards every thing; his advantages are three-fold; he is not checked by a fear that his wit may be impertinent; he may safely reckon upon attention while he speaks, and upon receiving unbounded applause when he ceases.

Lady Aucherly gladly seized an opportunity for quitting her tiresome companion, and proceeded with Mrs. Pytt into the card-room.

Here they found a party of gentlemen, playing very high, among them Colonel Macmaurice; he had been losing, and his irritable temper getting the better of his good breeding, he appeared with all the disadvantages which the passion for gaming entails on its votaries.

He

He had always possessed a wild ungovernable mind, which his education had not tended to restrain; he was early in life introduced among associates of profligate characters; and inheriting but a small paternal estate, the profession of a soldier was the natural choice for him to make. His manners now grew more polished, but his propensity for gaming increased, and he was half ruined, when accident introduced him to Miss Rodbard. Her fortune, however, being in trust, he had no power over the principal, and as he was still intoxicated with play, at which he generally lost his temper, and in consequence his money, he found himself continually under pecuniary embarrassments.

A few years produced a material alteration in his affairs. Castle Hastings was the property of his maternal grandfather, whose only son dying in consequence of a fall from his horse, Macmaurice unexpectedly became his grandfather's heir, and succeeded to an estate of five thousand a-year.

As he grew older, he became more prudent

dent in the choice of his company; and haughty as his rank and importance increased.

The education of his four sons was conducted with that irregularity which might be expected from the dispositions of their parents.

While children, they were, by turns, indulged and punished; to-day suffered to get drunk, the next sent off to Westminster-school; they frequently dined at the mess, and soon affected the manners and language of the company they mixed with.

Mrs. Macmaurice gloried in her sons, and by praising them when their bold spirits led them into scrapes at school, by laughing at their impudence, admiring their oaths, and making a joke of their getting drunk, she encouraged their licentiousness.

Fortunately for the boys, as they grew up, their good sense, in a great degree, checked their progress in vice; they were early introduced into the world, and, of course, before their education was half finished; yet they were agreeable in their manners, and

being naturally blessed with good memories, what little they had learnt they retained, which put them on a footing with many who had learnt more, but whose minds, like sieves, let every thing escape.

Their dispositions partook of both their parents, but the eldest was resolute and self-willed, without that spirit of pride which ruled every action of his father. John was the counterpart of his mother; Charles, in whom a deficiency of classical knowledge would have been most excusable, was perhaps the best informed: he possessed an insinuating address, with an intrepid soul; and Arthur was a fine manly lad, with an open good-humoured countenance, and was a general favourite.

Mrs. Macmaurice's ball was kept up with great spirit; she had pledged herself to get partners for the Miss Simmonses, and exerted herself in their favour with great success, though she met with occasional disappointments. Upon asking one gentleman to dance with Martha, he said he had danced with four of them already. Another said he

was

was engaged to one of them, trusting to his not being detected: a third had just sprained his foot; but she never gave up the point, and with infinite address made all her friends happy; and though a great deal of confusion took place at supper, it was allowed to be very well managed for so large a party.— The dancing recommenced soon after two, and at four the company began to retire, but it was past six before the house was quiet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIECES.

IT had been Lady Aucherly's intention when she left Bath, to have returned, immediately after Mrs. Macmaurice's party, but some of the officers having agreed to act a play on Monday for the benefit of the Bristol Infirmary; and a review of the troops being appointed for the Tuesday following, she wrote Sir Philip that Mrs. St. Clair had made her promise to stay till Wednesday.

Notwithstanding the confusion which had been occasioned in Duncan House, Mrs. Macmaurice invited a party to dinner the next day, and insisted on Lady Aucherly's coming with the Miss Simmonses — her ladyship acquiesced to pacify Mrs. Macmaurice,

maurice, but she was determined rather to stay away herself than go, accompanied by *all* her nieces, who began daily to grow more a burthen to her; she had no objection, however, to take three or four of them, and therefore considered of some way for disposing of the others. There was a family at Clifton with which the Miss Simmonses were acquainted; and Lady Aucherly thought it probable, that if two or three of them were to pay their friends a visit, they might be invited to stay the whole day, and she could get Mrs. St. Clair to invite two or three more: being desirous, therefore, of trying the experiment, she sent Gifford with a request to see Miss Simmons. Besides, she was not without a hope, that as most of her nieces had never ceased dancing the whole of the preceding evening, some of them might be knocked up for the day.

As Lady Aucherly breakfasted in her own room, the young ladies were enjoying their breakfast by themselves in the drawing-room: they were full of the last night's entertainment, and being delighted with the

gay

gay society they had met, they hoped, by dining at Mrs. Macmaurice's, to renew their acquaintance with some of the officers, and Jessy was describing the figure and features of Mr. Collier, who had danced with her, when Gifford brought Lady Aucherly's message.

"Good morning, Eliza," said her ladyship, on Miss Simmons's entrance, "I hope you have all slept off the fatigue of last night."

"We are all quite well, I thank you, Ma'am."

"I am very glad to hear it; you know, Eliza," continued her ladyship, "Mrs Macmaurice was so kind as to ask us all to dine with her to-day."

"Yes, Ma'am, we promise ourselves much pleasure."

"Nothing," said Lady Aucherly, stifling a sigh, proceeding from vexation, and speaking in her sweetest tones, "nothing, my dear, could give me so much gratification, as to promote your pleasures, but —"

Miss Simmons's smile vanished.

"It strikes me," continued her ladyship, "that we cannot *all* accept the invitation."

The smile half returned.

"Now, I have not the least objection to take three or four with me, and as I couldn't think of leaving any of you at home, my sister will be happy to see those who do not accompany me."

Miss Simmons was silent.

"Don't you think," continued Lady Aucherly; "it would be trespassing on Mrs. Macmaurice's good-nature for us *all* to go."

Miss Simmons acquiesced with a sadness, enlivened by the hope, that being the eldest, she would have the preference.

"And what think you," added her ladyship, "of calling on the Miss Slades this morning, with some of your sisters; I think you expressed a wish yesterday to pay them a visit, and in case they should ask you or your sisters to spend the day with them, it would be very pleasant for you — for I don't suppose you've any very great desire to go to Mrs. Macmaurice's; for my part, I'd much rather decline going."

"Oh,

"Oh, Ma'am, I'm sure I don't care about going; but the Miss Slades are not so much my friends; they were school-fellows of Phœbe and Clarissa."

"Well then they can go: suppose you hint this plan to them: you'll caution them not to let it appear as if they went on purpose to be asked, but in case they should be pressed to stay, they had better accept the invitation."

"I understand you, Ma'am," said Eliza, pausing; "and then, Ma'am, whom did you mean should accompany you?"

"It won't do for me to determine," said Lady Aucherly, with playful good-humour, and a look which Miss Simmons construed into a wish that she should be one, "it would appear partial in me to chuse."

"As I'm the eldest," said Miss Simmons, "perhaps—"

"Indeed, my dear Eliza," interrupted Lady Aucherly, dreading a direct appeal to decide the question—"I must leave it among yourselves to settle that matter; and, in my opinion, those who go to Mrs. St. Clair's

or the Miss Slades will have the most agreeable evening."

Miss Simmons left the room, and returned to the breakfast parlour to her sisters, and as she entered biting her thumb, they all exclaimed, "Law, what's the matter, Eliza?"

"You're not all to go to Mrs. Macmaurice's to-day," said Miss Simmons, in a solemn tone.

"Who says so?" cried Clarissa, eagerly.

"My aunt doesn't chuse to go with nine of us."

"Then who are to go with her?" enquired Anna.

"The elder one's, of course," returned Miss Simmons.

"Oh, to be sure," cried Jessy, "but I don't think my aunt meant to leave *me* out."

"And why not?" said Miss Simmons.

"How many *will* she take?" said Phœbe.

"Not more than four," replied Miss Simmons.

"And I'm the fifth," exclaimed Phœbe; "how *very* provoking; but haven't you a bad tooth-ache, Martha?"

"No,

"No, thank ye Phœbe," said Martha, triumphantly, "I never was better in my life."

"But I'll know the rights of all this," cried Sarah with warmth; "I don't see why the eldest should take upon 'em so, my father never ——"

"No, my father, never," interrupted Jessy, "makes any distinction of that kind."

"And if he were here now," said Anna, "'twould be another thing."

"That it would," added Jessy.

"Well, it's no use for you all to go quarrelling about it," said Catherine, "you can't *all* go, you know: and as we are under my aunt's protection, you must submit to her."

"It's settled," said Miss Simmons, coolly.

"But it is *not* settled," returned Sarah, getting angry at the composure of her elder sisters.

"I'll go to my aunt," said Jessy, who considered herself a favourite.

"Ah now, that's not fair," said Sarah.

"And 'twould be of no use," observed Miss Simmons; "but pray let's have done

 with

with this noise, you will be very happy at home, I dare say, and Lady Aucherly says Mrs. St. Clair will be glad to see any of you; and you," continued Miss Simmons, looking at Phœbe and Clarissa, "can go and call on the Miss Slades, and if——"

"I can't bear the Miss Slades," cried Phœbe.

"Nor I," said Clarissa; "and its very pretty in you to put us off in this manner."

"I suppose now my father's not with us, she thinks to govern us," said Anna.

"But I won't bear it," exclaimed Sarah, stamping with passion.

"L—d, who d'ye think cares for her," said Jessy, pertly; "I don't for one," said Sarah.

"Nor I, nor I," vociferated the younger ones.

The noise this occasioned prevented their hearing the door open, but at the sight of Lady Aucherly they were dumb.

"I was apprehensive of some accident," said her ladyship, as she entered, with a tone of enquiry.

The

The young ladies were not prepared with an answer, and a little pause ensued, when Miss Simmons observed that she had mentioned her ladyship's proposal, but that *all* her sisters wished to go to Mrs. Macmaurice's and a little dispute had been the consequence.

"Oh, if you cannot agree," said Lady Aucherly, "you must draw lots."

"That's the fairest way," said Clarissa.

"There now!" said Sarah, "you see my aunt did *not* particularize the four eldest."

"No," said her ladyship, "I thought you could easily have settled it among yourselves."

"Ah, Eliza!" said Jessy, laughing, while her eyes spoke a variety of little angry reproaches.

Lady Aucherly playfully presented them with nine strips of paper, four of which were longer than the rest. They drew in silence.

"Oh!" exclaimed Jessy, "*I* am to go."

"Nay, but I'll measure," said Sarah, eagerly.

"Clarissa and I go too," said Phœbe.

"And Catherine has the fourth," observed her ladyship.

Miss Simmons was silent.

"And Eliza doesn't go, after all, cried Sarah, with delight.

"Well, it has occasioned us a great deal of diversion," said Lady Aucherly; "but we'll all go to the play and review; didn't some of you think of calling on the Miss Slades?"

"I don't know the Miss Slades, Ma'am," said Martha, her eyes resting on a lace cap she had been making to wear at Mrs. Macmaurice's.

"I never saw them," said Mary.

"You all go to my sister's, then," said Lady Aucherly, turning with a smile to the disconsolate five, as she left the room.

"Thank you Ma'am," returned Miss Simmons.

The young ladies were too well bred, to carry the dispute any farther, though Miss Simmons felt the full force of several angry glances.

Lady Aucherly soon afterwards ordered her

her barouche to Duncan House; she was one of the first who called on Mrs. Macmaurice after her dance, and the only person admitted.

The colonel's lady was taking her chocolate in bed, and exclaimed, as Lady Aucherly entered, "you're a good creature, and I'm very glad to see you — you can't think how fagg'd I am; I had a great mind to lie a-bed all day, but I'll get up now you are come, and if you'll wait till I'm dress'd, I'll go out with you."

"*De tout mon cœur*," said Lady Aucherly, "I too feel a little the worse for my raking last night: I don't believe I've kept such late hours, since Sir Philip was attack'd with the gout; but to tell you the truth, I've been more fatigued this morning with nine young ladies."

"Ah! I don't wonder at it."

"I've determined not to bring more than four to dine with you to-day —"

"Then, for G—d's sake, look out four of the best."

"Would it were in my power; but there

has been *such* a contest; we could settle nothing without drawing lots."

"L—d! well, I hope *Miss* Simmons does'nt come — with her meek bosom."

"No, as good luck would have it — she is my aversion; she affects to be *so* gentle, and on every occasion puts herself on a footing with the younger ones; and with her formal face, it's impossible for her to look young."

"And when nine are all come out," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "people must suspect the eldest to be thirty at least! if there had been but five or six of them, one might have given you a hint, perhaps, how to manage, but deuse take it, nine are too many."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lady Aucherly, despondingly, "if you knew what —— "

"A mercy 'twould have been," interrupted Mrs. Macmaurice, in a hoarse low tone, "if some of 'em had been rock'd to death in their cradles."

"You're too bad," said Lady Aucherly. with a languid laugh, "but really a few could well be spared, their number makes them so ridiculous; and by way of saying something

something in their favour, people *will* settle up, that '*take them all together they are very fine looking girls,*' when, in my opinion, Miss Simmons and Martha are ugly enough to——"

"To blast the whole set," interrupted Mrs. Macmaurice; "but L—d, why are not they divided and parcelled out with their relations, some to the East, some to the West, and so on—have they no other aunt or—"

"Their father," said Lady Aucherly, "would rather lose a limb, I believe, than part with one of them, except to give Sir Philip the pleasure of their company."

"More fool he; for while they keep together, they'll never get married; they are in each other's way. Besides, a man would be afraid to marry one, lest he should have all his sisters-in-law upon his hands. I declare I don't know what to advise: I believe there's nothing you can do, but to puff 'em off, as the *most* beautiful and *most* accomplished—"

"Oh!" said Lady Aucherly, half groaning, "I've tried that: I had half a dozen

me at Brighton four years ago — and when I've spirits now, I set them off as well as I can."

"Ah, poor thing, I pity you, I'm sure;" returned Mrs. Macmaurice, as she finished the last layer of rouge. "Well, now I'm ready: Where shall we go? Stop, I must get my scarlet pelisse: it always looks well in a barouche; let's go into Bristol."

"Well thought of — I want to make a few purchases, and you must introduce me to the best shops, for I know nothing of Bristol."

"Oh, I'll be your guide."

As they went down Park-street they passed several officers, who bowed while the carriage drove on, and when it stopt at Shiercliff's library, they came up to make their enquiries, and were immediately dispatched for a novel.

"Get something new," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "but mind, no romances, I hate books full of subterraneous passages, grisly phantoms, and die-away Adelinas — Come let's see what you've got, 'Delicate Crimes,'

delicate

delicate nonsense, and here's 'The Innocent Adultress;' ha, ha, ha, what the deuse d'ye bring these for? I want one full of fun — try again — Here's Lethbridge and Colly coming; — so, good Sirs!"

"So, Mrs. Mac.," cried the major, "my sister without her nieces! — she looks quite forlorn: won't your *Auntship* take cold without your usual number of petticoats — I hope however no accident has befallen any of your kinswomen."

"L—d no," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, laughing, "they're all well at home, where you may see them as large as life."

"It's really surprizing then —" continued the major, "I shall look for the sky's falling."

"We had better put up the head of the barouche then," said Lady Aucherly, "and drive home — have you got a book you like, Mrs. Macmaurice? — come take Miss Edgeworth's Belinda, its a very good novel."

"So I will — Quantreuille get me a new army list — I want to see whether your name is spelt right yet; there's a good fellow, and

now Lady Aucherly, you shall see our dear regiment at large, L—d, how I do love an army list." *

At six o'clock a large party were assembled at Mrs. Macmaurice's, and sat down to a very elegant dinner.

"Upon my soul, Mrs. Mac," said Captain Pytt, "you're better than your promise, you invited me to eat up your dainty scraps."

"For my part," cried Major Lethbridge jokingly, "I expected to find nothing but half puffs, or a salmagundi of confectionary."

* To gratify such readers as may be of Mrs. Macmaurice's taste, and to afford them the same advantage which Lady Aucherly had, the following extract from the army list is subjoined:

COLONEL.
Marq. of Killarny, g.

LIEUT-COL.
Hast. Macmaurice
Hon. J. W. Gorges, c.

MAJOR.
Arth. Thos. Upton
George Lethbridge

CAPTAIN.
Cathcart M. Howard
Edward C. Pytt
Sir W. Fletcher, Bart.
Rich. Oldhusband
John Macmaurice
Charles Jones
Robert Quantreuille
Pat. O'Reilly
Thos. P. Butler
Gustavus Uniacke

LIEUTENANT.
Hen. Geo. Lamotte
Chas. John Wortham
Thomas Harrison
Arch. Chetham, *Ad.*
Hon. D. C. F. Wilson
Little Trevor
John Arbuthnot
John Burrard Brown
Vincent Fitzpatrick
G. Rose
William Saltash
Lord G. W. Donovan
Edward F. Cole
Alexander Foljambe
Philip M. White
Henry Lawrence

CORNET.
G. L. Tudor
—— Browne
Horace Pytt
Edm. James Collier
Arth. Macmaurice
Rob. Bourchier
David Allanson
*......................
Paym. Chr. Warren
Adj. Arch. Chetham
Surg. R. D. Burke
As. Surg. Geo. Helliar
—— Gibson
V. Surg. R. Mackintosh
Ag. Greenwood & Cox

"And

"And mutilated fowls, *to make up a shew*," added Lady Aucherly.

"So much did I rely on her veracity," continued the major, "that I thought it prudent to take something substantial before I came here; I never could make a dinner off scraps."

"Well, Major, as you've laid a foundation," said Captain Macmaurice, "will you take some soup?"

"No — I had soup last night — but I dare say, it's not a whit the worse for a *second* warming."

"Its quite another sort;" said Mrs. Macmaurice, affecting anger.

"Oh, aye, true, for now I recollect, the tureen of soup last night, was launched into Miss Pytt's lap, and nearly inundated us."

"Yes," said that lady, who was neither young nor fair, "t'was in my alarm at the cry of fire, that I helped to overturn the table."

"You were afraid of being *browned*," said Captain Pytt, with an arch look at his sister.

"'Twas

"'Twas very provoking," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "to have such confusion — though it made some fun too."

"Oh, it all went off with great eclat." observed the general's lady.

"And Mrs. Mac. looks so well after it," said Quantreuille, "I advise her to give a dancing bout medicinally, once a week."

"An excellent prescription faith," cried Horace Pytt, "the doctor expects a fee."

"I *feed* him handsomely enough I think," said Mrs. Macmaurice, eying his plate — "there's a good pound there — I'll owe you the odd shilling."

"D—n your shilling," cried Quantreuille, "I'll take it out at supper."

"That you'll take *in*;" said the major.

"And poor Mrs. Mac. into the bargain," added Wortham — "you're in for it doctor — Miss Catherine Simmons, shall I have the honour to take wine with you?"

Catherine was at the other end of the table, and with a little agitated start, replied "no thank you, Sir."

Lady Aucherly bit her lip. "My dear Catherine,

Catherine, you did not hear; Mr. Wortham asked you to take wine."

Catherine's blushes increased; she was not ignorant that it was unfashionable to refuse, and stammered out, "with great pleasure, Sir;" but this was lost on Wortham, who, immediately on hearing the "no thank you Sir," had entered into conversation with the general.

"Wortham!" exclaimed Captain John Macmaurice, "Miss Simmons is asking you to take wine."

"Oh, I didn't comprehend," said Wortham bowing to Catherine; "I believe we were under a mutual mistake."

"Mrs. Pytt, who built your carriage?" said Lady Aucherly, endeavouring to divert the attention of the company from the confusion into which Catherine was thrown.

"'Tis one of Godsall's — it's very plain."

"I admire it on that account, a gaudy carriage is my aversion."

"I've had an antipathy to a fine carriage," said Mrs. Stackhurst, "ever since our old coach nearly demolished one: 'twas soon

after

after the young Roscius came out in London; we were going to Covent-Garden, and by some accident or other, owing to the number of carriages going and returning just at the same time, the pole of our carriage ran against the splendid chariot of the Marchioness of Arrangford, which had been launched at the birth-day; she has a terrible temper, and she perfectly abused our old tub."

"I hope we shall have no accident to-morrow night," said Mrs. Pytt, "for I hear all the world are going to see our officers perform."

"Ah, I'm continually asked about this play," returned Mrs. Stackhurst — "it's the first part of Henry IV. isn't it? — and who takes the part of the King?"

"I believe that's scarcely settled yet," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "some of them were sulky with their parts — they didn't chuse to be king, or ——"

"We all wanted to be Falstaff;" said Major Lethbridge.

"And who has gained the point?"

"Captain

"Captain Oldhusband."

"I sha'n't take that for gospel, till I see his name in the play bill," said Mrs. Macmaurice as she rose to retire with the ladies to the drawing-room.

"So Wortham," said Major Lethbridge, "you and Miss Catherine had a row."

"Ah, upon my soul, I'm sorry I frightened her."

"She has rather tender spirits," returned the major; "you would not have found Clarissa or Miss Jessy so timid."

"G—d, how pat you have all their names," said Quantreuille; "do be so obliging as to enumerate them," continued he, taking out a memorandum-book, "I have a nomenclature of my dogs and horses on this side, and there's room for these nine divinities on the other."

"They are very fine girls," said General Stackhurst, "and I wont have them quizz'd in this manner; come Mr. Wortham, we'll drink Miss Catherine's health."

"Hadn't we better include all nine?"

"No

"No, by G—d, I'll not suffer that," said Colonel Macmaurice, "we'll drink a bumper to each of them, if you please."

"Here's Miss Simmons, to begin, cried Wortham.

"No," said Major Lethbridge, "Miss Catherine is indisputably your toast; *I* shall give Miss Simmons, because she's about my own age; we may be all suited among so many — their united ages, I reckon, amount to two hundred and seventy three."

"By G—d!" exclaimed the colonel, laughing, "its a d—'d shame to make their ages public; come drink your wine, here's a fresh bottle; how do you like it?"

"It's very fair," said the major, "but if your wine and Miss Simmons could divide their ages, each would be a gainer."

The conversation now turned on the flavor of the wines, and the late duties; politics followed, and about eleven o'clock the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room.

The card tables were already in order, and Major Bloodthorpe, and several other officers being announced, Col. Macmaurice formed

a party

a party for himself, while his lady headed the loo table. They played at a very high stake, and Mrs. Lethbridge having had a long run of ill luck, began to be fretful.

"L—d, how I do love to see Louisa losing," cried Mrs. Macmaurice; "she can't bear parting with her money."

"Very few can," said Lady Aucherly.

"No, but she's so *very* stingy—I don't believe she ever gives any thing to the poor: *I* do; you know I gave half-a-crown to-day to an old man, who told me he had been in the Royals; and at the pastry cook's there was a beggar woman and her brat blockading the door, so I set the child in a roar with a spoonful of ice, and sent off the woman with an oyster pâté."

"I dare say it made her sick," said Mrs. Lethbridge; "and your charity was rather *cold* towards the child."

"Come that's very smart—but it's more than you would have shewn."

"Perhaps so, and probably *you* would not have cross'd the street on the occasion—I question too, whether you would have had

com-

compassion on the old man, had he been a decayed barber."

"Nor you, even if he had been a decayed field marshal."

"But how came you," said Quantreuille, laughing, "to regale with ice in December?"

What's that to you; you must always sift every story I chuse to tell; suppose 'twas a brandy cherry — cut the cards, doctor — now for a change of luck, Louisa."

"I shall play;" said Mrs. Lethbridge, feeling really anxious to retrieve her losses.

"I shall certainly loo you," cried Mrs. Pytt, displaying the ace of trumps and a pretty set of teeth.

"Deuse take the cards," muttered Mrs. Lethbridge, "it's too bad."

"See what I've won," cried her sister, "will you go halves."

"Egad, there's some liberality in that," said Wortham.

"Almost equal to her generosity in the pâté story;" said Mrs. Lethbridge; it did her humanity a great deal of credit, to throw

away

away a luxurious morsel, when the money it cost, would have fed the wretch for three days."

"Aye, or a week, I warrant, with good management," returned Mrs. Macmaurice, casting a sly look at the major.

"You must however allow," said he, "she grows less miserly every day."

"Yes, she '*now gives sixpence where she gave a groat!*'"

"I'm glad you allow me some liberality," said Mrs. Lethbridge, "though I've a notion I can distinguish as well as you, between extravagant bounty which is often squandered without utility, and charity, which though limited, points to the distress of the sufferer."

"Very fine, very fine," cried John Macmaurice, "and if you go to the Cathedral to-morrow, you'll hear it over again—but I believe you never go to *charity* sermons."

"I shall give my mite to-morrow, notwithstanding; and if you go, you shall be my almoner."

"Ah, that's brave now," cried Mrs. Macmaurice,

maurice, "but L—d I know it goes to her heart to give."

"In this instance, I assure you 'tis *from* my heart."

"*A merveille!* Louisa," exclaimed Mrs. Macmaurice, "I declare you shine to-night—Collier's deal—Lady Aucherly don't go yet—oh, if you must," added she, in a whisper, "take French leave--come, Colly, deal—you can't hand Jessy down to-night."

As Lady Aucherly and her nieces drove home, Jessy exclaimed, "what a pleasant, delightful day I've had."

"Oh, 'twas vastly agreeable," said Clarissa.

"So gay," added Phœbe.

"I was not a little mortified," said Lady Aucherly to Catherine, "that you should expose yourself in the manner you did, when Mr. Wortham asked you to take wine; I saw he turned away half affronted."

"Yes, ma'am, but he took me so by surprize; I was attending to Captain Macmaurice, who sat opposite to me—and 'twas

so sudden —— I had only been introduced to him just before dinner."

"And how, pray, does that alter the case? you should always maintain that elegant self-possession, which gives us command over every action. Among well-bred people, as soon as an introduction takes place, they lay aside all form, and address each other with the same familiarity as if they had been acquainted for years: you should not '*sir*' and '*ma'am*' people as you do, unless you wish to keep them at a distance — I don't mean that you should entirely drop the expression, because to certain persons, the omission would be construed into a want of respect."

"Then how is one to know, ma'am, when it is proper and when not."

"By attending to well-bred persons: you should accustom yourself to an ease in conversation as well as in manner; a respectful address to certain people should be attended to; but to a young officer, 'If you please, *sir*'—'no, I thank you, *sir*,' betrays your little acquaintance with the world, and chills

every attention he offers; and pray remember another time, not to refuse a gentleman who asks you to take wine."

"Ma'am, I had just taken wine with Mr. Macmaurice."

"And how was Mr. Wortham to know that? you must suppose he meant it as a civility, and what must he think of being repulsed?—there's a sort of ingratitude in it. If a dozen gentlemen ask you to take wine, you should not refuse *one*; nothing is so ill-bred; you need not, of course, drink a dozen glasses; just touch it to your lips, the compliment's the same. It vexed me too, Clarissa, that you called Mr. Collier, *Captain* Collier; never confound distinctions; most of the inaccuracies I find in you all, arise from a want of presence of mind; you should be careful always to address people by their proper titles."

The carriage now stopt at Prince's Buildings; the five other nieces were sitting over a gloomy fire when Lady Aucherly entered. She wished them good night, and the young ladies retired to their chambers in *trios*.

"Well,"

"Well," said Mary to Clarissa, "had you a pleasant party?"

"Yes; 'twas pleasant enough; but—"

"But what now?"

"Oh I don't know; 'twas out of our way; I didn't feel quite comfortable."

"You weren't noticed much, perhaps," said Mary.

"No, 'twasn't for that; but the company were all so free and intimate with each other, that for my part, I felt more like a looker on —'twas very amusing too, to see their ways; all fun, nothing like form. L—d! look how Eliza stands before the glass curling her hair, without saying a word."

"I don't see what there is for me to say," answered Miss Simmons, "you have dined out; and I suppose there's nothing very remarkable in that."

"No, but 'twould be so natural, one would think," returned Clarissa, "to ask one a little about it."

Miss Simmons was not in a humour to be inquisitive, but as Mary was exactly the reverse, Clarissa went on chattering till her

eldest sister requested to be permitted to sleep.

The young ladies in the next room continued talking for a long time: Jessy had been much flattered with the attentions of Mr. Collier, and expatiated very minutely on every thing that had happened.

"Did you observe how sulky Eliza was when you came home?" said Sarah.

"I was glad to see it," replied Jessy, "I'm sure I admired her assurance to-day."

"Oh 'twas too bad," said Sarah, "and it could be no great consequence to her; there isn't *one* of the officers that would think of her a moment."

"But she wants to be thought just as young as we are," said Jessy, "I'm sure, I think she would stand just as good a chance of marrying ten years hence as now."

"And better," said Sarah, "for when she's five-and-forty, many an old bachelor or widower might think her a very suitable age; but now, she's neither one thing nor t'other."

In the room above, Catherine had retired

quietly

quietly to bed, while Phœbe was giving her account of the party to Anna, when, during a pause in her tale, some soft sobs were heard proceeding from Catherine's bed.

"What's the matter?" said Anna.

"Law!" exclaimed Phœbe, "are you crying?"

"What *can* be the matter?" repeated Anna.

"'Tis nothing," said Phœbe, "only my aunt was displeased with her."

"'Tisn't for that," said Catherine, fretfully, and having once given vent to her voice, she continued, "to think of my being such a fool as to refuse Mr. Wortham."

"What did he offer to you?" said Anna.

"Law, no," said Phœbe, "he asked her to take wine, and she not attending, said "no, thank you, Sir."

"Law, that *was* silly," cried Anna, "don't you know how often we've been told ——"

"Don't I know that as well as you," interrupted Catherine, "and dy'e think I'm not *mad* with myself; such a handsome man!"

 "I forget

"I forget which was Mr. Wortham?" said Anna.

"Don't you remember," said Phœbe, "that tall man, in the Light Dragoons, with rather a proud look."

"And did *he* ask to drink wine with Catherine," cried Anna, "and *she* to refuse?"

Catherine's bed vibrated with her sobs, while she exclaimed, "To think, as my aunt says, how injudicious it was; I know what she meant; you know it might have been an overture on his part; and if I had only shewn common politeness, there's no knowing what might have come of it."

"I wonder," said Anna, "how many of us will ever be married?"

"I sometimes think none of us will," said Phœbe.

"If *two* are," said Catherine, recovering her spirits, "it will be as many as I expect."

"And more than I do," cried Anna, "if we all follow your plan, and refuse gentlemen."

"Don't teaze so," said Catherine.

"It's

"It's very strange," observed Phœbe, "that none of us have ever had any thing like serious attentions paid us."

"Please to speak only for yourself," said Anna.

"Oh, if you've any secret admirer," returned Phœbe, "I dont pretend to speak on the subject."

"Bless me! how you catch me up," cried Anna.

"Don't make such a noise," said Catherine, "I'm afraid we shall disturb my aunt, we had better go to sleep."

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY MORNING—THE CATHEDRAL—MILITARY THEATRICALS—SUNDAY EVENING.

SOME of the Miss Simmonses accompanied Mrs. St. Clair and Maria the next morning to Clifton church; and some went with Lady Aucherly and Mrs. Macmaurice to the cathedral, the entrance of which was crowded with Light Dragoons, who attended the service.

They all made way for the colonel's lady, who, as she passed, stopt to ask one man how his leg was; another, when his wife was put to bed, desiring him to send to her for any thing

thing she wanted; and by this condescension, Mrs. Macmaurice had made herself very popular among the troops.

After the service was over, Lady Aucherly directed her steps to the monument of Capt. St. Clair: it was of white marble, representing the stern of a ship, bearing the name of the *Alciope*, in which he had received his last wound: a Drapery, bearing the Arms of the St. Clair family, concealed the upper part of the vessel. The whole was executed in Flaxman's best style, and cost three hundred guineas.

A Tablet beneath told the melancholy tale of his death.

"How simply elegant," exclaimed Lady Aucherly; "To the memory of Augustus St. Clair."

"L—d! what a sermon we had," cried Mrs. Macmaurice: "it really made one *quite* uncomfortable—but there, 'twas all very good and very proper — what a mercy 'tis one can go home and forget it all—Well, I declare now, this is a very handsome monument."

"How extremely well the shells are done," said Phœbe; "that Queen Conch wants only colouring to persuade us it is a real one."

"The ornaments are particularly appropriate," observed Lady Aucherly, with a sigh.

After admiring it for some time, they passed on to the carriage; not, however, without doing justice to the elegant pillar in memory of Sterne's Eliza.

"You never saw Captain St. Clair, I think," said Lady Aucherly, to Mrs. Macmaurice, as they drove to Clifton.

"I've heard that he was very handsome."

"I trace his features in Maria," returned Lady Aucherly; "he had a most interesting countenance. The Duke of Montolieu and Lord Frederick St. Clair also at times remind me of him, though they were only his second cousins."

"Oh one can trace a family likeness," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "between relations still more distant — Mrs. St. Clair was married very soon after you, wasn't she

"I had

"I had been married about four months, and my sister was with me at Dover, when we were invited to a dance on board a frigate; St. Clair was then first Lieutenant, and was quite a stranger to us; he danced with Sophia, and I believe with *them* it was love at first sight: they were married in six weeks afterwards."

"That shewed some spirit; I hate your long courtships: he made his fortune by prize-money, didn't he?"

"He was very lucky, both as Lieutenant and when he was made Captain: I recollect congratulating my sister on his appointment to the Alciope, and her answer is still in my mind; "while I rejoice at his promotion, the danger attached to it fills me with a thousand anxious fears."

Soon after Mrs. Macmaurice got home, several visitors who had been at her Ball, came to pay their devoirs.

"I have ordered the band," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "and I expect it here every minute—my dear Phœbe Simmons, run to

the window, and tell me whose sword that is clanking along the pavement."

"I don't know, Ma'am," said Phœbe.

"Let me see then—L—d, child, don't you know the brigade major!—why he's not going to pass the house to be sure!" said Mrs. Macmaurice, throwing up the window. "Orderly! run after Major Sykes, with my compliments—step out——"

"The band's coming, ma'am," said Phœbe.

"So major, you were going to give me the slip; walk up. Orderly, tell the master of the band I want him. Mr. Holmes, play my new reel. Ah, Sykes, what have you to say for yourself?"

"I had the honor of calling yesterday—"

"But you didn't see me; you should repeat your calls till you do; don't you like to see my face?"

A laugh from the company drowned the major's answer.

"How dy'e like my reel, Lady Aucherly? Now doesn't it sound ten times better than with the fiddles? Come, who'll call a

tune?

tune? Mr. Holmes, give us that new medley."

"You'll catch your death, Mrs. Mac," said Major Lethbridge, shaking her shoulders, "leaning out of window in December."

"Don't," exclaimed she, "I *will* stay till they introduce Sir David Hunter Blair."

"Then pray have some compassion on your friends," said he, lowering the window.

"L—d, you're going to guillotine me—look there, who's this coming?"

"Mrs. Mansell's chaise and four."

"Oh yes, I see kitten-face in the corner—now we shall have some fun in hearing her silly remarks."

"I think I never saw a countenance so vacant," observed Mrs. Lethbridge.

"Her face," said Miss St. Clair, "resembles an empty house; for when you look through her windows, you see an unfurnished apartment."

"L—d," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, as the carriage stopt at the door, "look at the soft soul—how unmeaningly she stares at the band."

"How

" How proud Mr. Mansell must be," said Mrs. St. Clair, " to have such an angel doing the honors of his table."

" She is most amazingly ignorant," added Miss St. Clair.

" And I have heard," said Lady Aucherly, " that great pains were taken with her education: her father was a clergyman, and was very anxious to make her clever."

" I should have sworn he had been a milliner," exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair.

" She has no memory I believe," continued Lady Aucherly, " and consequently has forgotten every thing that was taught her."

" Her memory must be very partial then," said Mrs. Pytt, " for she can detail the most minute trifles about dress, with an exactness that is astonishing."

" But she has such a round-about way of expressing herself," said Major Lethbridge.

" Hush, I hear her gentle steps on the stairs — ah, my dear Mrs. Mansell," continued Mrs. Macmaurice, taking her by the hand as she entered, " now this is being very sociable."

" Have

"Have you been an airing?" enquired Lady Aucheryl.

"Yes, I've been all round the Down since church."

"Ah, I know you never miss church."

"I always go once, but I suppose you haven't been to-day."

"For why?" cried Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Oh, I don't know — 'cause of the band and all."

"What, you don't like music?"

"Oh, yes, but then somehow — country dances you know, on a Sunday, somehow-like ——"

"Oh, you think it wicked?" said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Why somehow — did you never hear of the story about the dance on a Sunday, and — what appeared and all?"

"No; What?" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, winking to Major Lethbridge.

"Oh law! I couldn't tell it."

"Pray let's have the story," said Lethbridge; "come, Mrs. Mansell, we must insist upon it."

"I don't think I can remember it all—" said Mrs. Mansell, hesitating and getting frightened, "its rather long."

"So much the better;" they all agreed.

"Stop one moment," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "I'll order some cold meat for the band, and then we'll hear it all comfortably."

"I think there's nothing so delightful," said the brigade major, "as hearing a good ghost story."

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Mansell, "'tisn't quite a ghost story."

"We are all impatient for it, whatever it may be," said Mrs. Pytt, negligently leaning back in her chair.

"Now for it then—" said Mrs. Macmaurice, drawing her chair near Mrs. Mansell, who, after some hesitation, began——

"'Twas on a Sunday you know, as this might be, and there a party of ladies and gentlemen went from London a pleasuring-like, to the country house of one of the party; and there they had a grand dinner and all—and so says one, what shall we do to amuse ourselves

ourselves in the evening? so one said; let's have cards; but the gentleman of the house —no, I'm wrong, 'twas his lady,—said 'tis unlucky, we forgot to bring cards, but we can have a dance, for we've musical instruments in the house, and two of the servants can play the fiddle: so they all agreed that was much better than cards; so accordingly the music was ordered, and dancing they had, for all 'twas Sunday you know: well and in the middle of one of the dances, I forgot what tune it was ———"

"The Devil among the taylors, I believe," said Major Lethbridge.

"Ah, now, you've heard it before."

"No indeed, I only guess'd the tune."

"However," resumed Mrs. Mansell, "I don't know that the tune signifies ———"

"It might have been some hornpipe perhaps," said Mrs. Pytt.

"Or possibly," said Major Sykes, "the *very* tune the band was playing when you came here."

"Oh law, no sir," said Mrs. Mansell, "now you quite put one out."

"Pray

"Pray let's have silence," cried Mrs. Lethbridge, "I'm dying to hear the sequel."

"Well then," continued Mrs. Mansell, encouraged by the mock attention which every one now paid her, "they were in the middle of dancing, when all of a sudden — you see 'twas a lone house, in a garden, with walls round it, what should they see on the wall — 'twas a moon-light night, — but a strange gentleman in a scarlet coat: so the company being all in jollity and fun-like, said, 'let's ask him in:' so accordingly they opened the window, and invited him to join the party; so he came in, and the lady of the house danced with him: and there they went on dancing, till twelve o'clock at night; and they had been so merry, they hadn't particularly noticed the stranger's figure, only they observed he was tall and well made you know, and his face was very handsome; fine eyes and all; oh, I don't know how handsome; and there he was so witty and entertaining, that he quite charm'd all the company — well, about *twelve* o'clock, just after he came to the bottom of a dance, he

he led his partner to a seat, and began talking quite smart-like, when the lady's fan happened to drop — she stooped to pick it up, and immediately uttered such a *dreadful* scream, as if she was possessed-like; the company were all panic-struck, and came up to her to know what was the matter, and to help her you know; but she could not speak, but pointed to the stranger's feet, and what should they see — but cloven feet! — they knew, then, you know, that 'twas the wicked one — so they were all terribly frightened, as you may suppose; and in an instant, the wicked one changed himself into his own shape, and spat upon the lady ——"

"A nasty fellow!" said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Oh law! but then you know," continued Mrs. Mansell, "'twas like a curse upon her; and there, there was thunder and lightning, and the wicked one clapt to his wings, and sped himself away; leaving a strong smell of brimstone in the room, with all a thick fog-like."

"Good G—d! how dreadful;" exclaimed Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Were

"Were you there?" said Mrs. Pytt.

"Me! law no—" returned Mrs. Mansell, "I'm sure 'twould have killed me; I wouldn't see the wicked one for all the world—ah you may smile, sir," added she, turning to the brigade major, "but it's a *true* story."

"And when did this awful affair happen?" said Mrs. St. Clair.

"Oh law, I don't know: a great many years ago; 'twas told me, when I was a very little girl, by an old lady, who had it from a person whose aunt was present, and confessed it on her death bed; and there, she said, nothing could be so terrible as 'twas; and they were all, you know—their consciences prick'd-like, and ever after led very virtuous lives."

"Indeed it's a very surprising story," said Lady Aucherly, "and a warning not to admit strangers in scarlet to our houses."

"He wasn't in regimentals, was he?" said Mrs. Pytt.

"Oh, no doubt," cried Major Lethbridge, "in the uniform of the Devil's own."

"Oh

"Oh law, now," said Mrs. Mansell, observing they all laughed, "now don't make a joke of it—because you know something might happen."

"It's too serious a subject to make joke of," observed Mrs. St. Clair, "tho' I can't say I've much fear in the day time."

"Nor I, *so much,*" returned Mrs. Mansell.

"Did you ever hear a story so well told," said Major Lethbridge, going up to the window to Jessy Simmons.

"She seem'd to have it all by rote," said Jessy, "and I warrant has told it in the very same words a hundred times."

"Look," said Catherine, "how the band are enjoying themselves with their cold meat."

"What delicate sandwiches they're making," cried the major; "do observe the little drummer, how he's stuffing."

"It makes one's mouth water," said Jessy.

"Mrs. Mac," said Major Lethbridge, "you delight to tantalize us; it's impossible for human nature to bear it."

"What's

"What's the matter, major?"

"Why you keep us starving here, while we can't help seeing the good things devoured by those cormorants."

"L—d, you are always thinking of your belly; but upon my soul, I had forgotten it—ring the bell; I've a cold collation for you, and some fruit which Lord Athorpe sent me from Bath; well now, as I suppose those fellows have done cramming, we'll have some more music."

"We'll avoid country dances if you please," said Major Lethbridge, with a sly wink, "for *somehow* I feel a sort of qualm *like*."

"Oh, they shall play *psalms* then," said Mrs. Macmaurice. "Holmes!" cried she, leaning out of the window, "can you play us any good psalms; L—d, look how the man stares, with '*Psalms*, ma'am!' we must call for something else, they've none in their books."

"There can be no objection to marches, I think," said Lady Aucherly.

"Play

"Play some of your best marches then," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "the Duke of York's March; oh, here's something for Lethbridge—now we shall see what a good knife and fork he'll play."

"Help Mrs. Mansell to something, major," said Miss St. Clair, "for she seems quite exhausted after her story."

"Well, I *will* take a little wine and water," said Mrs. Mansell.

"Upon my soul," cried Charles Macmaurice, entering the room, "here are fine doings; I didn't expect to find you all gormandizing; I'm come very apropos."

"Oh, you're too late," said Miss St. Clair, as he took a seat near her; "Mrs. Mansell has been entertaining us with a most interesting story, which, *by my patience*, lasted a full hour."

"Faith, I'm quite out of luck then," said he, archly, "but the truth is, I have been seeing my clothes packed up."

"Are you going then, so soon!" said Miss St. Clair, with emotion.

"I shall stay over the review—but as this

was

was a leisure morning, I've been putting up my drawings, and other things which I could not trust to my servant."

"Is that from your pencil?" said Miss St. Clair, pointing to the representation of an engagement between a French and English frigate.

"Many years ago," replied he, "but it cannot boast of much merit."

"I'm fond of Sea-Pieces," said Maria.

"If you will honor me then," said Charles, "by taking care of a few, till I see you again — I should ——"

"In other words," said Maria, "you wish to make me a present; since you are so frank then, I will accept of one: but tell me, Mr. Macmaurice, are you in the navy from the persuasion of your friends, or prompted by your own inclination?"

"It was entirely my own choice," said he, "and contrary to my mother's wish; she would have had us all in the army: but I was at Westminster school, with Lord Paget Bentley, who was intended for the navy; and being great friends, our pursuits were the

same

same — my profession has been always a pleasure to me, and I am doubly happy since I find you are partial to it."

"It's impossible," said Maria, "to withhold our admiration from the protectors of our country."

"To be the protector of Miss St. Clair," said Charles, lowering his voice, "would make me—"

Here Mrs. Macmaurice came up, interrupting them, with, "I won't have you two *tête á têting* here, while we are all eating; come, what will you have?" said she, looking round to the table — "Lethbridge, you sha'n't have all that pine; come, make Miss St. Clair a sandwich — now don't say you've no appetite; L—d! why shouldn't you eat and drink like other people — Charles, help her to a glass of Madeira; you want more wine, don't you major? — Catherine Simmons, my dear, do call some tune; Sykes, open the window for her."

"Why, Mrs. Mac," said Major Lethbridge, "you've made yourself quite hoarse; let me give you a glass of water."

"Throw *water* to the dogs, I'll have none on't—" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, in a theatrical tone; "give me a glass of wine."

"Why Mrs. Mac, you spout famously," cried Major Sykes.

"'Twould be a wonder if I didn't; I've heard nothing but spouting from morning to night, ever since this play was thought of; and all by piece-meal: one cries, '*Revolted Mortimer!*' then another's full of '*Lean Jack*' and '*Eastcheap*—' then comes Lethbridge, with '*Anon, anon, Francis,*' so that I've got a complete jumble in my head, of '*What is honour?—Food for worms—a cup of sack—what upon compulsion?—Four in buckram suits*—"

"Bravo! Mrs. Mac," cried Lethbridge; "bravo! *my Lady the Hostess!*"

"Now *do* major," said Mrs. Pytt, "give us a speech from your part."

"Come Prince Henry," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "stand up man."

"How the devil can I be heard, while the band's thundering 'the Downfall of Paris' in your ears."

The

The music was ordered to stop, and the major burlesqued Prince Henry's address to Falstaff's body.

"Excellent!—oh, charming!—bravo!" they all exclaimed: "pray proceed," said Mrs. Pytt.

"How pleasant all this is," whispered Phœbe to Anna, as they stood together at one of the windows.

"*So* different," returned the other, "from our hum-drum ways at Hammersmith."

"How delightful it must be," said Jessy, "to be a colonel's lady, and have the band whenever you please—"

"Yes," sighed her sisters.

"Ah, here's our Hotspur," cried Mrs. Macmaurice.

"That's clever," said Mrs. Pytt—"now you're come, Wortham, we'll have a rehearsal."

"Do go back—" said Mrs. Macmaurice, pushing him to the door, "and come in reading the letter."

"Oh, no—let Prince Henry kill him," cried Mrs. Pytt.

"Upon my soul," said Wortham, looking round, "you seem to be all leagued against me—pray who first proposed quizzing me?"

"No matter—do as Mrs. Mac bids you," said Mrs. Lethbridge, "and come in reading the letter."

"I must have a Lady Percy then."

"Who will be Kate?" cried Mrs. St. Clair; "Mrs. Macmaurice, do oblige us."

"No, that won't do," said Major Lethbridge, "Wortham would prefer Miss Catherine Simmons."

"Oh dear, no, sir—" said Catherine colouring, "I couldn't—sir, indeed—"

The company all declared that as her name was *Catherine*, she must take the part.

"It's not fair," said Lady Aucherly, "that you should be all against her"——

"Oh, but it *must* be," said Mrs. Pytt.

"It's all settled," cried Wortham, approaching the intimidated Catherine, with "how now, Kate," and giving her the book to read her part.

Catherine,

Catherine, through agitation, let the book fall, and stammered out, "Oh, sir—but I —indeed you—I never—"

"I'm sorry I've discomposed you, Miss Simmons," said Wortham, observing her distressed feelings.

"We shall have her *sobbing* again to-night," whispered Anna to Phœbe.

"Oh, *pray* Miss Simmons don't mind it," said Mrs. Pytt.

"L—d, child, what's the matter," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "never you care for that rude fellow—come Wortham, give us some other part."

"Indeed, I believe we had better give up acting this morning."

"Oh no, no, you shall give us the description of a fop."

"So I will, but you must all promise not to laugh."

Wortham then began, but as several of the company betrayed symptoms of risibility, he broke off with, "D—n me if I go on any longer."

"Oh,

"Oh, now don't be angry," said Mrs. Lethbridge.

"Upon my life," said he, "it's too bad."

"Don't swear upon your life another time," said Miss St. Clair, "because, '*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets* ——' you know the rest."

"Come, Hotspur," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "don't be cast down; now do go on, and we'll be as silent as the grave: you can't think how I long to take a part."

"Law! so do," said Mrs. Mansell.

"When I do, it will not be to amuse a *Bristol* audience. Where are you going Sykes?"

"I've an appointment with the general."

"Oh, I wouldn't keep you from your duty for all the world; so good morning, and if you see the colonel, pray remind him that he's engaged to dine at Mrs. St. Clair's."

"And I have a message to him likewise," said Mrs. St. Clair; "give my compliments, and tell him he won't be welcome unless he bring Major Sykes with him."

"You're

"You're extremely polite, but I dine out with the general."

"You can spend the evening with us then: — Mr. Wortham, we shall see you?"

"You may depend upon me," said he, following Major Sykes, and exclaiming, "*come, let me take my horse, which is to bear me like a thunderbolt against the bosom of the Prince of Wales.*"

"*Not* 'till I've handed this lady to her carriage, if its the same to you, brave Percy," said Major Lethbridge, as Mrs. Mansell was taking leave.

In the evening, most of the party met at Mrs. St. Clair's, where Lady Aucherly and Colonel and Mrs. Macmaurice had dined.

As soon as tea was over, Mrs. St. Clair enquired how they usually amused themselves on Sunday evenings.

"I hope," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "we shan't have to sit round in a circle, and look in the fire."

"We can have some music," observed Mrs. Pytt: "I see you've a harp."

"Now Fanny wants to sing," said her husband.

"Unfortunately," said Miss St. Clair, "the harp is sadly out of tune—"

"We mustn't have cards, I suppose?" said Mrs. Macmaurice, bluntly.

"D'ye think," said Major Lethbridge to Mrs. Mansell, "any thing would have happened, if those *gentry* you mentioned this morning, had played *cards*, instead of dancing?"

"Oh law, sir, I'm sure I—don't know: —yes, I should think worse, because cards and dice, you know—"

"True," returned the major, with gravity, "in that case, probably *three* or *four* strange gentlemen in scarlet might have made their appearance."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Mansell, half joining in the laugh excited by the major's remark.

"Have you no other good devil story, Mrs. Mansell?" enquired Major Bloodthorpe: "if not, I second Mrs. Macmaurice's motion."

"Is

"Is it a thing *quite* impossible," said Miss St. Clair, "to amuse ourselves without cards? rational conversation, I presume, is entirely out of the question."

"Hadn't you and Mrs. Mansell better begin then?" said Mrs. Macmaurice, "and we'll sit by and be edified."

Miss St. Clair affected not to hear her, and entered into conversation with Mr. Wortham, who with Major Sykes and the young Macmaurices, had just dropt in.

"Hand me a screen, Jack," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "this fire's rather too much of a good thing — I've been finding out likenesses in the hot coals, till — "

"Your nose resembles one."

"The L—d spite me, Jack, if I don't get you turned out of the regiment."

"Don't you have cards to-night?" enquired Arthur Macmaurice, who had not been present when the question was discussed.

"No," said his mother, "Mrs. Mansell's afraid of the Devil's coming among us."

"Oh, never fear him," cried Major Sykes.

" Let's have cards," added Captain John Macmaurice, " and if he should come, we'll win his money."

" Perhaps he'll be too sharp for you," said Mrs. Pytt.

" I'll be d——d if I pay him then."

" But you *must* give the Devil his *due*," cried Major Lethbridge.

" Then we must run him through the body," said Wortham.

" A *devilish* good thought," cried John Macmaurice, " we'll *devil* him—I'll give him *cut two*."

" With *such* champions," said Mrs. Pytt, shewing her pretty teeth, " Mrs. Mansell's fears *must* subside."

" Oh dear! I hope I'm not the means of preventing your playing," said Mrs. Mansell, who was not proof against ridicule: " I should like a game myself, as well as any body—it's a pity 'tis *Sunday*."

" Oh!" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, in a low censorious tone, " is that *you*, Mrs. Mansell! look at the black man behind you."

Mrs. Mansell shivered, and half obeyed, but

but was checked by the laughter of the company. In the mean time, Mrs. St. Clair had ordered cards; but before the tables were arranged, the motion was negatived *on account of the lateness of the hour.*

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAY — THE REVIEW — A CLIFTON BALL — RECAPITULATION.

THE following morning, Lady Aucherly devoted to the beautiful prospects in the vicinity, and particularly at King's Weston, the delightful residence of Lord de Clifford.

A play performed by officers, was a novelty in Bristol; and the theatre was filled at an early hour. Mrs. Macmaurice's party in the stage-box attracted much notice; and the Miss Simmonses, surrounded by military men, were the envy of many a damsel encircled by dull relations. The performance went off with great *eclat,* and Mrs. Macmaurice

maurice took home all the officers to a noisy supper.

Lady Aucherly's barouche and four was among the first on the downs the next day at the review. The weather proved uncommonly fine, and the sight drew together a great concourse of people. Mrs. Macmaurice, in a dashing riding dress, was on horseback; and coming by Mrs. Pytt's landaulet, cried, "L—d! there's something going wrong—look how Mac gallops along the ranks—I'd lay my life every other word's an oath—oh, they're getting into order now—whose gay affair is this?"

"The gaudy liveries betray Mrs. Mansell's taste."

"Yes," said Jessy, who was with Mrs. Pytt, "I see her kitten-face looking about, trying to understand what's going forwards—I fear she's coming this way to plague us."

"How d'ye do, how d'ye do," cried Mrs. Mansell, "what a nice day it is: Miss Jessy Simmons, you must enjoy this sight; where are your sisters?—oh, I see—Law, and there's your sister Anna on the barouche box—she

must

must have a fine view of the soldiers and all — how well they look, don't they, Mrs. Pytt?"

"Yes, indeed, they make a very good appearance; I never saw the militia look better."

"Bloodthorpe has been taking great pains with his regiment," said Mrs. Macmaurice; "they march now very well, and the officers begin to look *like* officers — come, let's go round, I want to get a better sight of the cavalry — Jessy, you'll like that better, there's one *Collier* among 'em."

"I hope the men won't be too much tired to be at the rooms to-night," said Mrs. Pytt — "a ball's nothing without officers."

"Pray, Mrs. Macmaurice," enquired Mrs. Mansell, "who is that captain by the general?"

"L—d, what a question! he's one of the aides-de-camp."

"Oh law, ah, so 'tis — and what horses are those so beautifully caparisoned, with nobody on them — who are they for?"

"They are the general's led horses."

"What,

"What, six of them! What a beautiful leopard's skin one has, with —— all gold-like — so pretty — and what are those poor creatures, with ——"

Mrs. Macmaurice had gallopped off, leaving Mrs. Mansell wondering at the *bât* horses.

Mrs. Pytt's carriage drove on, and stopt near Lady Aucherly's barouche, which was surrounded by company. Some fashionable looking men on horseback were talking together at a little distance; they knew nothing of Lady Aucherly, while she knew enough of them, to feel mortified by their remarks, particularly as they were over-heard by many of her acquaintance.

"No very great show of beauty here," observed Sir John Mellish.

"Faith," returned Mr. Carleton, "there are some fine women, too."

"Yes, a sprinkling—there's a set of good-looking showy girls, all of one family, scattered about — the Simmonses. Some *worthy aunt* of their's, I'm told, is bringing them out—egad she has undertaken a troublesome

 job,

job, if she's trying to get husbands for them all, in these scarce times."

"They hope perhaps to catch some of the military."

"Very likely—I think I saw them last night at the theatre, in Mrs. Macmaurice's box."

"Were those them! I couldn't imagine who they could all be—there was one in a paradise feather, I thought a very fine woman."

"That was the aunt—a Lady Archer, or some such name; quite a made up beauty—damnably rouged."

"Lady Aucherly!" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, riding by, "come this way, you'll see a great deal better where Mrs. Stackhurst is—come Mrs. Pytt, follow me."

Lady Aucherly's barouche drove on, leaving Sir John and his friends fully aware of their ill-timed remarks.

At the Clifton ball, Lady Aucherly had the gratification to perceive herself almost the only object of admiration.

"Did

"Did any mortal," exclaimed Mrs. Macmaurice, "ever see such *scare-crows* as there are in the room!"

Lady Aucherly, scrutinizing the company through her glass, observed, it was a very motley crew.

"I can't conceive," said Mrs. Pytt affectedly, "who they can all be—what *skinny* looking people some are: it's not the season I believe."

"Oh law, no," cried Mrs. Mansell, who always contrived to push herself into the party, "but it's just as full, because, you know, lodgings are half price now."

"No wonder then," returned Mrs. Pytt, "there are so many odd sort of gentry—people who look as if they had no relations."

"And such *scraps* of quality!" added Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Who is that elderly young woman at the top of the dance?" enquired Lady Aucherly.

"It's one of the Lady ——," replied Mrs. Macmaurice.

"She

"She has figured away on these boards these ten years," said Major Lethbridge—"quite a standing dish."

"One or the other of them," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "is always top couple, first and second course."

"Law, do look at that lady," said Mrs. Mansell, "did you *ever* see such a funny dress?"

"L—d," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "I swear I've seen that tarnished gold muslin at a dozen routs since I've been here."

"What, you've visited some of the people then?" said Mrs. Mansell.

"Lord, yes; here and at the Wells too; such fun I've had—the oddest old ladies I've played cards with."

"They ring *my* money," said Major Lethbridge, "to see that it's good."

"And such loads of cake they'll eat," added Mrs. Macmaurice, "I'm sure they come with *real hunger*; I've seen their little rapid grey eyes run over the contents of the basket of cake, and immediately pounce upon the largest piece with *such* accuracy."

"And

"And with a long lean little finger," interrupted Mrs. Lethbridge, "they'll hook up two or three rout cakes besides."

"I watch'd one of them once," said the major, "slyly shifting her place from one room to another, while the refreshments were handed about, by which means she secured five different ices."

"Upon my word, you've drawn a very excellent caricature," said Lady Aucherly.

"Oh it's all true," said Mrs. Macmaurice —"and then they dress in such trumpery; and at cards, when they're dealing, they shake their hands to shew off their rings."

"Hush, hush," whispered Lady Aucherly, "Mrs. Mansell does that."

"Deuse take it, I'm always making blunders—the other day we were talking about the vaccine inoculation, and I asked Mrs. Chetham if she had ever had the small-pox, forgetting how dreadfully she's marked; you know she's pitted all over."

"With fairy cups and saucers," added Major Lethbridge, "and to mend the matter, Martha Simmons was next to her at the time."

"And

"And *her* face is *piteously* marked," said Lady Aucherly.

"That's very old, Caroline," returned the major, "though it went off well enough, when you applied it to Miss *Pytt*."

"Poor Amelia!" cried Mrs. Pytt, "she's terribly quilted."

"Her face is like a split muffin," said Mrs. Macmaurice with a laugh—"L—d! if she could but hear us."

"Don't be alarmed," said Miss St. Clair, she'd hardly be offended at such a *skin-deep* attack—though she might deem it illiberal to make a personal blemish the subject of ridicule."

"But my dear Maria!" observed Lady Aucherly, "you don't distinguish between a playful allusion and the ill-nature of——"

"I make no compromise," interrupted Miss St. Clair.

"L—d help us all," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "we must go to school again, to learn manners—I wonder whether Mrs. Kimberly would take me again, after having fought with the teacher and run off with a royal *dragoon!*

dragoon! — perhaps Miss St. Clair could recommend a school where they take such *wretches* as compare people's faces to split muffins."

"There's the school for scandal."

Miss Simmons now approached with a lengthened visage.

"I thought you were dancing with Captain Quantreuille!" said Lady Aucherly.

"My partner," replied Miss Simmons, in her solemn tone, "fell down, and was so much hurt, he could not dance any more."

"How unlucky for *you!*" cried Mrs. Pytt, as Major Bloodthorpe led her to the dance.

"Ah, spite," muttered Miss Simmons.

"I'd lay my life," said Mrs. Macmaurice aside to Lady Aucherly, "it's all Quantreuille's *fudge* — L—d! when did O'Reilly return?" continued she, turning to Major Lethbridge.

"Can't say — but he's coming to thank you for his leave of absence; he would never have got it from the colonel."

"How d'ye do, Pat?" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, shaking hands with him; "Lady Aucherly, Captain O'Reilly."

With

With Mrs. Macmaurice, a little of the gentleman, with great volatile spirits, secured an officer in her good graces; with Lady Aucherly much more was required; she bowed rather distantly to Captain O'Reilly.

"Pat, you'll dance, wont you, Pat?" cried Mrs. Macmaurice.

"I would," said he, in the Irish accent, "but I don't see any young lady disengaged under thirty—and not being quite so much myself, I wouldn't like to dance with my supairior, at all, at all."

"Oh, I'll get you a good partner," said Mrs. Macmaurice, introducing him to Miss Simmons.

"Augh! by St. Patrick," exclaimed he, "but this is a trate now, to be sure—you hid yourself behind Mrs. Mac that I mightn't see your swait face, but I saw you all the time."

"Dear me, where can Phœbe be!" cried Miss Simmons, tip-toeing and stretching her long neck to its utmost extent. "It's very vexing—I was next to Phœbe ——."

"To

"To Phaibe — and who's Phaibe, now?"

"One of my sisters, sir — dear, I don't see her any where; I'm afraid I shall lose my place, there are so many pushing up; I was above all those — I declare it's a shame — I see I shall lose my place."

"Lose your place — don't say another word about that — I'll put you at the top, my dair honey, and the devil's in it, if you don't find your place, and Miss Phaibe too, before you get to the bottom — stop, stop, my good craiture, I must'nt be hurried, I've a few trifling incumbrances to get rid of, so now, don't put yourself in a passion, and I'll be after capering with you in a twinkling."

"He seems a strange genius," said Lady Aucherly.

"Ah, he is a very good fellow for all that," returned Mrs. Macmaurice, "and has a pretty little estate in Kilkenny, but the colonel doesn't like him, so when he wants leave of absence, he comes to me."

"I have never seen so much of your regiment before."

"Oh,

"Oh, you know, we've been about so much. We were in Ireland three years: I'm very fond of Ireland."

"Mr. Lamotte is not with the regiment now, is he?"

"No, he's in town with Sir William Fletcher, who is about a majority; and if he gets it, Lamotte will have *his* troop."

"I liked him very much, he was a very gentlemanly young man; my brother brought him to Aucherly-park last Christmas."

"Ah, he told me of your hospitality."

"Sir Philip does not dislike company, but he has an aversion to the form of asking them; he prefers their coming by accident."

"I like him for that—I hate form myself, and now I know his humour, I shall pop in upon him one of these days."

"There's Miss St. Clair," said Mrs. Mansell, "she has been dancing with Mr. Charles Macmaurice; and I have watched them sitting together on that form two whole dances," added Mrs. Mansell, concluding the sentence with a triumphant giggle.

"You

"You make *wonderful* discoveries," said Lady Aucherly.

"Hadn't you better dance, Mrs. Mansell?" said Mrs. Macmaurice, wishing to get her away.

"Oh law, no — how I *should* like to see Mr. Charles in his regimentals."

"You mean his naval uniform, I presume," said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Oh law, ah, yes."

"Hadn't you better go to tea, Mrs. Mansell?"

"Presently; the tea-things are hardly put yet."

"There now," said Mrs. Macmaurice, as several fashionable men were sauntering into the room, "I know these are all *Bath* men, there's something in the cut of them, that I could swear to a mile off."

"I know one of them," said Lady Aucherly, letting her eye-glass fall, as the party approached.

"I recollect all their faces at Bath," returned Mrs. Macmaurice.

"The gentleman with his arm in a sling, is the Hon. Mr. Hope," said Lady Aucherly, "I am very well acquainted with his aunt, Lady Mary."

"How did he hurt his arm?"

"In a duel."

"I like him for that—introduce me."

Lady Aucherly bowed to Mr. Hope, and enquired after Lady Mary.

"I left her very well, a few hours ago," said he, disengaging himself from his party.

"I return to Bath to-morrow, and shall make a point of calling on her."

"She will be very glad to see you: she is in Great Pulteney-Street."

"Ah, Hope!" cried Major Lethbridge, coming up with Wortham and Quantreuille, "how are you, I haven't seen you this age; how long have you been here?"

"I only came this morning: some Bath friends of mine were coming here, and insisted upon bringing me with them.—I hear you had a famous review to-day."

"'Twas a charming sight," said Lady Aucherly.

"We

"We were unfortunate in arriving too late—I hope the Miss Simmonses are well?"

"They were never better," said Major Lethbridge; "they are all nine here, looking like so many angels—but you should have been at the review, to have seen them to advantage; one or the other of them was perched upon every dicky on the ground; every carriage you met, had a Miss Simmons."

"George is as great a mad-cap as ever," said Lady Aucherly, "he's incorrigible—who is that gentleman with your party, now speaking to Sir John Mellish?"

"The Marquis of Haughton," replied Mr. Hope.

Lady Aucherly had heard much of this young nobleman. He had just succeeded to the title and immense possessions: report spoke loudly in his praise as an elegant scholar and an accomplished gentleman; and she was now much struck with a nobleness in his figure and countenance.

"Such a man, thought Lady Aucherly, would I select for my Caroline; but while

we continue living in the country, she must not expect to form such an alliance; yet, should chance introduce her to him—but alas, sighed her ladyship, as she reflected on the confined circle in which she was destined to move at Aucherly Park, they may never meet.

"He is very handsome," observed Lady Aucherly.

"And one of the pleasantest men I know," returned Mr. Hope; "a natural vein of humour runs through his conversation, you can hardly help laughing to hear him."

"*Aunt Simmons*," cried Martha, coming up to Lady Aucherly, "what was the name of that waltz that ——"

Her ladyship would not hear.—The Marquis of Haughton was at that instant passing by; and Mrs. Macmaurice provokingly cried out, "*Aunt Simmons*, you're spoken to."

Mr. Hope, in spite of politeness, could not repress a smile; while Lady Aucherly was inwardly mortified, that the marquis should have over-heard her addressed by such an appellation

appellation as "Aunt Simmons;" which she was certain he must, as she perceived the whole party were much amused; one of them looked back, as if to hear more, and she was convinced she heard the marquis in a low tone, imitating Martha's voice, in, "*Aunt Simmons*," which seemed to afford the rest of the party infinite diversion, as they went into another room convulsed with laughter.

Martha stood confused with the consciousness of the blunder she had made; but Lady Aucherly had too much presence of mind to shew the least displeasure, which would have betrayed her wounded feelings; and with an air of unconcern, replied, "I forget the name of the waltz you mean."—Martha was glad to get away.—"They have lived so much with Mrs. Simmons, their father's sister," continued her ladyship, "that they sometimes, through mistake, honour me with her name."

"The force of habit is very strong," said Mr. Hope, "and nothing is so common, as confounding the names of those to whom

we are attached by the same link of affection: I have five brothers, and my mother continually calls George, for Edward, Frank for George, and Harry for your humble servant."

Lady Aucherly was sensible of Mr. Hope's politeness in making an excuse for Martha, but secretly thought, there was a wide difference between a mother's calling one son for another, and her ladyship's being addressed by so vulgar an appellation as *Aunt Simmons*: she however passed over this little *embarras* with a well-bred ease, and continued talking to Mr. Hope.

"We are just going to tea, will you join our party?"

"With all my heart."

"Come you shall make tea for us, and for your friends too, if they will give us their company," said Lady Aucherly, hoping to get an introduction to the marquis, that she might have an opportunity of obliterating by the charms of her elegant manners, and captivating conversation, any impression he might have received to her disadvantage.

"The

"The marquis would be vastly happy, I'm sure," said Mr. Hope, "but I believe he's gone: I know he came with the intention of staying but a few minutes, as he sets off for London early to-morrow morning."

Lady Aucherly's hopes were baffled: she saw no more of the Marquis of Haughton that evening.

The excursion to Clifton had been productive of various mortifications to Lady Aucherly, and Bath had not as yet afforded her its promised pleasures. She hoped, however, that Mr. Simmons, in a very short time, would be sufficiently recovered to return home, and relieve her from the incumbrance of his daughters: but unluckily, he had been seized with another paralytic stroke the morning of her arrival in Bath, which was likely to detain him there much longer:—she could only comfort herself, therefore, with the idea of his continuing too ill for his daughters to leave him;—but in this she was mistaken; he gradually grew better, and insisted that his daughters should not be confined at home on his account.

Mrs. Mansell had followed Lady Aucherly to Bath, and was so full of what she had heard and seen at Clifton, that she could not rest till she had unburthened herself.— She therefore called at the Dorringtons:— Mrs. Dorrington was out; but the young ladies expressed themselves very glad to see her, and desired she would give them an account of Mrs. Macmaurice's party.

"We heard a little of it from Mr. Myers, who was there," said Lucy, "but he did not tell any particulars."

"He only dealt in generals," said Emily, "but," added she, winking to Henrietta, "we shall now be treated with circumstantials."

"Mrs. Mansell, I'm sure, will favour us with a genuine account," said Miss Dorrington.

Mrs. Mansell then began a confused detail, with, "oh law, 'twas all so pleasant— and there I was kept so, for my new dress, that 'twas quite late when I got there—and in the hall so many officers' hats, and— swords and all—and when I entered the room,

room, there was such a glare of red coats — 'twas quite dazzling like —"

"And contrasted with the uniform of the light dragoons —" said Henrietta, "must have —"

"Oh, 'twas sweet," interrupted Mrs. Mansell, "all blue and silver — there were a good many Clifton people, and several gentlemen came over from Bath; for Mrs. Mac (they all call her Mrs. Mac) she says, there are no young men at Bristol — I suppose she means none all fashionable-like — but there were two or three Bristol ladies though, quite smart, with diamonds and all — and there 'twas such fun, you know, to see the Miss Simmonses all longing to get partners, and Mrs. Mac asking one and another to dance with them; then there was such crowding to get places at supper; and in the middle of it all, there was a cry of fire — I expected every minute to swoon, for the smell was so strong, we thought the house was in flames, and I'm monstrously afraid of fire — so we all jump'd up, and in our hurry-like, to save our lives,

there was *such* a bustle; forms tumbling down — and then in the middle of all the fright-like, part of the table gave way, and the soups were overthrown, and the things scattered about — all — jelly — you know — *such* a mess — you may imagine — "

" You give such an animated description," said Emily, " that the scene is perfectly presented to my eye."

" Law, sure," cried Mrs. Mansell, looking pleased — " well, and you may suppose what a worry Mrs. Mac was in; for 'twas very provoking you know — nice supper — and all: so she got up, and said no one should stir, for she would see what was the matter; but to be sure, we did not chuse to sit still and be burnt to death — "

" It must have been a laughable scene," said Henrietta.

" Oh, but 'twas very dreadful," continued Mrs. Mansell, " if you had heard the cry of fire! fire! that there was — and the strong smell; and after all, what should it be, but one of the large bell-ropes that caught fire — so then we went to supper again, and while

we

we had been away, the table and all had been set to rights—and we had so much fun about it; 'twas said indeed, that 'twas a trick of one of the officers—but I don't think 'twas, somehow."

"You must have been very much alarmed," observed Miss Dorrington, "and I should hope no gentleman could be so thoughtless as to sport with the feelings of——"

"Oh law, 'twas dreadful," interrupted Mrs. Mansell, "I had a beautiful lace round my new gown, that was all torn—it's quite ruin'd."

"I'm sure," returned Miss Dorrington, "I feel for your *lace*, but it was fortunate there was no worse accident; such an alarm, to some persons, might have been attended with serious consequences."

"Oh law, yes, but when 'twas over, we thought no more about it like—"

"Well, and how did the play go off?" enquired Emily.

"Oh, very well, I think; but the review was delightful; and there Mrs. Macmaurice

went on horseback, in a uniform habit, all blue and silver, and a helmet—and look'd so well: and then in the evening, we all went to the Clifton ball—so gay—oh, and I forgot, Sunday morning we all went to Mrs. Mac's by way of a lounge, as she said, and there, there was the band and all—out before the door—playing all manner—that was the wickedest part of it—and officers spouting and keeping such a noise, and laughing—and all—"

"Was Mr. Wortham there?" enquired Henrietta.

"Law, do you know him—what a pleasant, handsome man he is—"

"Henrietta thinks so too," observed Emily. "he's a great favourite of her's."

"His father's estate in Cornwall joins Lord Dorrington's," said Henrietta, "and when I was at Langony Abbey, last summer, I met Mr. Wortham frequently."

"And he's not far off now," said Mrs. Mansell, giggling, "so I dare say, you may meet him again soon."

"Not likely; we shall go to town in a week."

"Law,

"Law, how pleasant!" exclaimed Mrs. Mansell, "and does Miss O'Connor go too?"

"Certainly," returned Miss Dorrington.

"That will be very nice for her—d'ye think your mamma will take you to all the parties, and operas and all?"

"Oh, yes," said Henrietta, "and we are to be presented."

"Law, sure!" cried Mrs. Mansell, her silly grey eyes twinkling at the thought.

"Sarah was presented two years ago," continued Henrietta, and—"

"Ah, I recollect now—how delightful—you havn't settled your dresses, I suppose—not till you get to London—"

"No, certainly," said Lucy, "we shall have ample time to consider that *important* part of the affair: we should not go to town so soon, but for the meeting of parliament."

"Ah, I see Mr. Dorrington's name in the papers sometimes—but I don't often read the speeches—all politics, you know—except when I see '*hear! hear!*' and '*a loud*

 laugh,'

laugh,' put in italics you know—it's well enough."

"We generally read the debates to my mother," said Miss Dorrington.

"Law, that must be very dull for you,—*I* like to read all about routs and fashionable parties like, and horrid murders, and robberies, and birth-day dresses and all—oh, and I had almost forgot to tell you, what I heard; do you know—*that* Mr. Ross that was here last Thursday is deranged—oh, yes he is, for he is called 'Mad Ross,' and Mrs. Mac says, he sometimes talks quite odd-like; but here's your mamma come home I see—law, what a pretty hammer-cloth: don't mention what I said, if you please, about his being mad and all—because, you know, it mightn't be so well, somehow."

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

HINTS TO YOUNG LADIES — A RENCONTRE.

BATH still continuing very full, Lady Aucherly spent her time with much gaiety, and two or three of the Miss Simmonses were generally at her house: they had now acquired some degree of *ton*, and under the auspices of so fashionable a woman, they became more noticed. They had learnt to feel the awkwardness of their whole number being seen in company, but it was now to little purpose that several staid melancholy at home, for if one was seen at a party, the others were always supposed to be there too; and Lady Aucherly had often the mortification to overhear some ludicrous remark,

asserting

asserting that the nine Miss Simmonses were in the room.

Sir Philip was always wishing his nieces to enjoy themselves; and Lady Aucherly perceiving there was no chance of getting rid of them, had the good policy to do all in her power to set them off to the best advantage; and frequently gave them *such* advice as her knowledge of the world, and the principles early inculcated by her mother, well qualified her to afford.

One morning, finding herself indisposed from the heat of a crowded room the preceding evening, Catherine, Sarah, and Jessy, who were at the house, breakfasted with Lady Aucherly in her dressing-room; and the other sisters soon afterwards called to enquire how she was.

"My dear girls, this is very kind of you—how is your father?"

"Tolerable, I thank you, ma'am," said Miss Simmons, "he has had a very good night."

"I'm rejoiced to hear it."

"Oh," said Clarissa, "I think he will

recover

recover now; Jessy, whom did you dance with last night?"

"I'm sorry, my dear Clarissa," said Lady Aucherly, "to find fault with you."

"Me, ma'am?" cried Clarissa, with surprize.

"It is not, my dear, that I doubt your filial affection; but surely, you must agree with me, that there is great impropriety in speaking of a father's recovery, and making a frivolous enquiry in the same breath."

Clarissa acknowledged the justness of her ladyship's reproof.

"I know," continued Lady Aucherly, regarding them with a sweet smile, and resting her fine eyes on Miss Simmons, "I know I take great liberties; but if I give you a few hints, it is for your advantage, not from a desire of finding fault."

They were of course all sensible of her ladyship's kindness, and set in awful expectation of what was to follow.

Gifford now entered, to inform Lady Aucherly that her dress-maker was below.

"I shall be engaged for some time," said

her

her ladyship — "she may either wait or call again in an hour's time."

"Mercy on us," muttered Sarah.

"We shall have an hour's jobation by that," whispered Jessy.

"It is not, believe me," resumed Lady Aucherly, after a short pause, "out of ill-nature that I speak of your faults; but from a sincere wish to improve you:" then changing her tone, "you know Jessy," said she gaily, "it's impossible for me not to see — what I am going to say, is not of the greatest moment, but still its worth mentioning; 'twas at dinner yesterday, — you used your knife to eat fish; I couldn't mention it at the time, as Mr. Hope dined with us."

"Oh, Jessy," said Martha, "I thought you knew better — always use bread, and your silver fork to fish."

"What I particularly mean," said her ladyship, "is, that the knife should never be applied to the mouth"

"I don't know how I came to do so," said Jessy, "for I know better."

"Surely," said Lady Aucherly; "for it is

is not your ignorance of propriety, but your inattention of which I complain:—now—though I am not angry with any of you," continued her ladyship, directing her discourse to Martha, "for calling me 'Aunt Simmons,' yet I much wish you could discard such local habits—I have never seen Mrs. Simmons, but possibly your excuse may be, that I resemble her."

"Not in the least," exclaimed Jessy, laughing, "Aunt Simmons has a full moon face."

"My dear," said Lady Aucherly, joining in the laugh, which burst from the other sisters, "my dear don't say, '*Aunt Simmons*;' nothing sounds so badly, as *Aunt* did this; *Father* said so; always add the little pronoun when speaking of them; you must certainly allow it sounds better to say, *my father* desired me, or *my sister* told me so—and I remarked yesterday, Sarah, you asked Mr. Hope how his aunt was: you are not sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Hope or Lady Mary, to call her his aunt: when you are not very intimate with people, it is

genteeler

genteeler to enquire after their friends by their proper titles; but you must be careful not to misname them. I would wish you to be as elegant and correct as possible in your conversation: it may appear trifling to be so particular, but it is not to be despised; for nothing is so engaging, as an easy style of address.

"Your understanding is so superior to poor silly Mrs. Mansell's, that you cannot fail to observe how ridiculous she makes herself, whenever she opens her lips: and not merely owing to the subject she speaks of, but to an imbecile mode of expressing herself, a poverty of language: she cannot break herself of a habit of commencing every sentence with 'Law,' or, 'Oh law,' though I know Mr. Mansell often tells her of it."

"You must have observed," continued her ladyship, "that for want of appropriate epithets, she is obliged to qualify her meaning by auxiliary words; such as, 'all, somehow, like.'—I don't even compare Mrs. Mansell to any of you; but as her defects cannot escape your notice, I wish you to see the

the disadvantage she labours under, and of course do all in your power to express yourselves with neatness and fluency, without being too precise. My mother used to procure the most approved French novels for my sister and myself to translate; and the habit of exercising ourselves, in selecting the best English word to convey the spirit of the original, made us tolerably conversant with our native tongue."

"Miss St. Clair, I think," said Clarissa, "is never at a loss."

"She has a good memory," returned Lady Aucherly, "and has read a great deal; she is certainly very clever."

"Don't you think all the Dorringtons are rather too formal, ma'am?" said Phœbe.

"Indeed I think at present they are, but it is more the consequence of their being so little in the *beau monde*, than from any fixed habit; it will wear away: I am speaking of the daughters; your remark, as applied to *Mrs.* Dorrington, is perfectly just—they have been brought up with great care, and are well informed: they always express themselves

selves with propriety, and when they allow themselves more ease, which I can perceive they are not a little inclined to do, they will appear to more advantage."

"I thought," said Jessy, "Lucy was quite *dégagée*, with Lord Faulkner last night."

"Possibly it may be a match," observed Catherine.

"And I dare say the family would approve of it," said Jessy.

"I think," said Lady Aucherly, "they are extremely well suited for each other, and if Lucy has no objection to him, I admire her for letting him see it. I know there are people," continued her ladyship, "who would think it the height of indelicacy, for a young woman to shew the slightest degree of preference to a man, before he had given her reason to suppose he was attached to her; but though I would by no means encourage a *levity* of behaviour, I certainly think it no harm to appear gratified by well-bred attentions—or at least, instead of looking almost sulky, as I have often noticed

girls,

girls, they might endeavour not to make themselves disliked; if you happen therefore to dance with a man, not disagreeable in his person, and of a suitable rank and fortune, you should not merely content yourselves with the giddy present, but consider whether it might not be possible to make yourself so agreeable to him, as to secure him a partner for life."

"I was surprised, Mary," added her ladyship, "that you should think of dancing down to the very bottom of the set, with Sir George Ramsey, the other night: you know young men are seldom fond of dancing, and in an instant you might have discovered he was one."

"He as good as told me so, ma'am," said Mary.

"Well, and as he's a fashionable man, you, no doubt, would be pleased to dance with him again."

"To be sure she would," said Jessy, slily, "she doesn't often get such."

"I'll engage she will never dance with *him* again," said Lady Aucherly, "for don't

you think he will remember the *indefatigable* Miss Mary Simmons, who, with unwearied exertions, made him dance down five and twenty couples; and what was the consequence? *he* had taken care, not to over-fag himself, and when he came to the bottom, could address you with the utmost calmness; but *you* could not so much as answer him, your mouth was extended from ear to ear to give vent to your breath, which convulsed your whole frame in struggling to escape; and while you kept fanning yourself and looking so pleased, he had leisure to examine every expression of your face, which was distorted owing to the violent exercise you had taken. Indeed you should have omitted the last six couples, and not have looked so over delighted. If you dislike your partner, it's another thing; dance and fag him as much as you please, if he hates dancing; and if you see he is fond of it, affect a pain in your side and sit down; if he attempts to talk, pretend not to hear him; the music may be your excuse—and as it is most likely he has said something not worth repeating, he

he will feel silly in having said it at all, especially as he may be overheard in talking loud; this will make him uncomfortable, and you may depend on it he'll never solicit your hand again."

"Oh, I've done that before now," said Sarah, "and I know several other tricks besides."

"You must take great care not to practise them too often, for believe me," said Lady Aucherly, "a character for good temper is very little inferior to beauty; therefore it is much the better plan to avoid the necessity of cutting a person: suppose on entering a ball-room, you observe a gentleman likely to ask you to dance, one, who, however agreeable in a domestic circle, wouldn't be at all the style of man, for a partner; you must of course not look near him, for should you do no more than courtsey, he might construe it into an invitation, and though he keeps hovering about you for an hour you must avoid giving him an opportunity of speaking, for notwithstanding it is unfashionable for gentlemen to speak first,

yet on the ground of intimacy, many will intrude. This is a hint for you, Phœbe; you know what I mean."

Phœbe bowed an affirmative, and Lady Aucherly would have dropt the subject, but as two or three of the sisters expressed a curiosity to know to what this alluded, Lady Aucherly said, "Oh it's nothing of any consequence, and it was the conversation only that brought it to my recollection. I was walking up the street with Lady Mary Hope; Mr. Hope was walking on a little before us with Phœbe and Catherine, and seeing them stop, I concluded, as the street was full of *gens de condition*, that they had met with some friends, but when I approached nearer; I perceived *such* a beau! —and now pray, may I know who it was?"

"Mr. Crawley, ma'am," answered Phœbe.

"What, the son of your father's apothecary! And what could he have to say to oblige you to stop; was he giving you an account of his morning rounds? I did not dare to look at Lady Mary or Mr. Hope, but hurried on, leaving Phœbe to hear out

her

her beau's tale — but what occasions Anna's suffusion?" said Lady Aucherly, "perhaps you have been equally condescending to this Adonis: well, for my part, I should never have thought it necessary to have been so *very certain* that it was Mr. Crawley, in such a place as Milsom-street, where there is so much to excuse your over-looking an acquaintance — and such a one as Mr. Crawley is surely no *very* great acquisition to your party — if I mistake not, his whiskers were powdered and pomatum'd — frightful! but in other respects he didn't look the gentleman: his silk stockings — in short his *tout ensemble*; and as it was not *his* place to speak first, you might have easily avoided him. Nothing is so easy as to cut a person in Milsom-street; the shops, carriages, and company may be supposed to attract your attention from the person immediately passing you; and if it should be a very slight acquaintance, a person of no importance, there is another way; you may look in the person's face with an absent air, and seem to look at some object beyond him; but

this requires great presence of mind—you had better have recourse to the shops, or affect to have something very interesting to say to any one with you; but in case you should meet this person in a place where it would be of no consequence to know him, you may give him a good tempered look, with an inclination of the head; but on no account speak, lest you should induce him to join you and continue *beau-ing* you to a fashionable part of the town, where it would be mortifying to be seen with him; a little fore-thought is of infinite service."

"I didn't want young Crawley to stop and speak, ma'am," said Phœbe.

"*Young* Crawley," said her ladyship, with a sneering smile which shewed she disapproved the epithet, "would never have dreamt of stopping to speak, had he not interpreted something in your looks to warrant it; however, as I see you would have no objection to drop the subject, and as Anna looks as if she pleaded guilty, I'll say no more, except one observation I made

soon

soon afterwards, which has just occurred to me.

"If you recollect, Phœbe, Lady Mary and I passed you; at the top of the street we met the Dorringtons, and after turning the corner I looked back for you, and at the same time you appeared; but with such a fixed smile, that like Mary's at the bottom of the dance, it distorted every feature; I guessed it was the same smile with which you parted from the Dorringtons; and though you had your sister with you, yet I've no doubt it would have been just the same, had you been alone, and any person not having seen the occasion of it, must suppose it to be the natural expression of your face—and a fixed smile is very unbecoming."

"How silly it makes Mrs. Mansell look," said Jessy.

"But you must not give up smiling; though to be frank with you, Phœbe, a smile does not become your set of features, therefore let it be more momentary."

There is no saying how much longer Lady

Aucherly would have gone on, had not Mrs. Macmaurice entered with "Come for a week — What's the matter, are you ill?"

"Only a head-ache," said Lady Aucherly, "but I'm really very glad to see you; where are you, I hear there are no lodgings to be had."

"For love or money," returned Mrs. Macmaurice, "so we are obliged to put up with the White Hart till some good cripple or other will march off; the colonel likes it very well, but I had rather be in this street."

"How are all your sons?"

"Hearty, thank God; there are only two in Bristol now, Jack and the aid-de-camp. Hastings is gone to Exeter, and Charles to Portsmouth, he writes me that he's on the point of sailing for the Mediterranean."

"I wish him success with all my heart," said Lady Aucherly.

"They expect to fall in with the French fleet, I believe — Well girls!" continued Mrs. Macmaurice, turning to the Miss Simmonses, "you have gaiety enough here I suppose."

"Upon

"Upon my word," said Clarissa, "I don't think we shall ever be so gay, as we were at Clifton."

"They are always talking of the pleasant time they spent there," said Lady Aucherly, "and I'm sure they are indebted to you for it."

"Ah, I wish I could make it as pleasant for them here, but you know," said Mrs. Macmaurice, winking to Jessy, "I haven't got the officers here."

"If that were all," said Lady Aucherly, "I believe there are always plenty in Bath."

"Ah, but they're not in regimentals; they're nothing in plain cloaths, are they, Jessy?"

"Then you must give the preference to scarlet," said Sarah.

"L—d, I don't know—Mac. was in the Royals, when I married him: there were three or four of us, at Mrs. Kimberly's all dying to be officers' ladies—and so it turned out: we've often met since and laughed at our *scarlet* fever: didn't you know Miss Joddrell? she married into the Guards:

I saw her when we were in barracks at Colchester — we used very often to breakfast together, and have the ammunition bread, and such fun we had, dining at the mess ——."

"Officers always make a place pleasant," said Clarissa.

"They're delightful partners in a country dance," added Jessy.

"Oh, take 'em all in all," cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "I could live and die amongst 'em."

"I think," said Lady Aucherly, "you are too indiscriminate in your partiality for them. I must agree with you, that when officers are well educated, and preserve the manners of gentlemen, they have some advantages; they have generally seen a good deal of the world, which makes them entertaining companions: but then, this class will maintain a superiority in brown as well as scarlet."

"You can't pick and chuse always," returned Mrs. Macmaurice, "we are very fortunate in our regiment: only they are a

little

little quarrelsome now and then—and that's in a great measure owing to Mac. I do believe."

"I think you said the colonel came with you."

"Yes, and he'll stay here a week; Colonel Gorges is come to Bristol; *they* never agree, so to get Mac. out of the way, I persuaded him to take me to Bath, and, if I can, I'll get him to London."

"To London!"

"Oh L—d, I haven't seen you since I received Mrs. Grosvenor's letter, she's going to give a masqued ball in February, and wants us to come up. I think we shall go; the colonel is very fond of London—so am I—couldn't you go too?"

"Sir Philip," said Lady Aucherly, "is now I fear too well pleased with Bath, to think of leaving it very soon."

"Ah, but you used to be able to do as you pleased—cant't you ——."

"Indeed, interrupted Lady Aucherly, "I—we'll talk of that another time: how are you engaged this evening?"

"I am but just arrived, I've no engagement."

"Will you have charity on us then, and spend the evening here?"

"With all my heart."

"'Twould be a mere compliment, I presume," said Lady Aucherly, "to ask the colonel's company."

"Oh, I don't know that—you are a great favourite, and if Mac. has made no engagement, I'm sure he would like to come."

"I thought he did not often go into quiet parties—but you must persuade him: we shall be very glad of his company."

"You may depend upon *me*," said Mrs. Macmaurice rising, "therefore as I shall see you again soon, good bye; I want to run about the town a bit, will any of you girls come with me?"

The Miss Simmonses were flattered by the invitation, and some of them immediately volunteered to go with her.

As colonel and Mrs. Macmaurice were no favourites with Sir Philip, Lady Aucherly almost

almost repented having asked them without his concurrence; and thought one of his nieces might reconcile him to it, better than she could.

"Jessy, my dear," said her ladyship, "step to your uncle's room, and tell him, I have invited colonel and Mrs. Macmaurice here this evening: *she* has promised: but I don't suppose *he* will come; you may say, it's not too late to put them off, if he should have any objection."

Jessy soon returned. "My uncle thinks, it will be rather awkward to have them without other company; and that you had better ask somebody to meet them."

"Who can we possibly have;" interrupted Lady Aucherly; "there is scarcely time to think of any one."

"He mentioned the Dorringtons, ma'am."

"The most unsuitable ——."

"He said, that you had asked them once or twice, and they couldn't come, and as they are going to town in a few days, you might as well take the chance once more; and he thought they would

take it friendly to be invited in an off-hand way—."

"They are rather unsuitable people," said Lady Aucherly, "but I've no objection, though I think a gentleman or two would be better, but after all, the colonel may not come; run and tell him, my love, I have no objection to ask the Dorringtons."

Jessy returned with the message to her uncle, and a servant was dispatched to Mrs. Dorrington's with the invitation, which was accepted.

Mrs. Dorrington came to Sir Philip's before Mrs. Macmaurice; and as Lady Aucherly could, when she pleased, make herself very agreeable, Mrs. Dorrington soon forgot a little *pique* she had felt on first meeting her at the upper rooms.

Mrs. Macmaurice was presently announced and formally introduced to Mrs. Dorrington, Mrs. Lovell, and the young ladies: Mrs. Dorrington's manner was polite, though somewhat distant.

"Shall

"Shall we see the colonel?" enquired Sir Philip.

"He dined out," replied Mrs. Macmaurice; "but he said he would be here before nine."

"It is a good many years since I have seen him," said Sir Philip.

"Wasn't it when you were at the Isle of Wight," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "and our regiment was waiting there, expecting orders every day for Gibraltar?"

"I believe it was; that must be five years ago."

"Yes, quite: I should have liked to have gone very much, but the 23d were ordered instead, and we embarked for Ireland."

"I have a cousin," said Mrs. Dorrington, "at Gibraltar, who gives no very favourable account of it: it's very hot in summer."

"The heat I've been told is more oppressive than in the West-Indies:" observed Mrs. Lovell.

"You are from Jamaica, are n't you ma'am?" enquired Mrs. Macmaurice, rather bluntly, "what part pray?"

"Mon-

"Montego Bay."

"Mr. Grosvenor's estates lie that way," said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Mr. Lovell had property adjoining his; we were then acquainted with Mr. Grosvenor, but I have never met him since I came to England."

"Then you never saw his wife — my sister, ma'am?" said Mrs. Macmaurice.

"I never had that pleasure. Mr. Grosvenor was quite a young man when I knew him, and must have forgotten me by this time."

The correct deportment of Mrs. Dorrington was calculated to inspire respect; even Mrs. Macmaurice felt its influence: indeed though she allowed herself great liberties, her manners seldom degenerated entirely into vulgarity, though too often bordering on it: in Mrs. Dorrington's company, she was free, but not bold. Lady Aucherly in a moment knew how to appreciate the assumed decorum, and to what cause to attribute it, while Mrs. Dorrington was inclined rather to let it plead in extenuation

of former impressions, than to examine it too closely.

The Miss Dorringtons and Emily were so celebrated for their musical talents, that they were in most parties requested to play, and Emily was accompanying her voice in a plaintive Scotch air, when the heavy steps of Colonel Macmaurice were heard on the stairs.

"I know the sound of Mac's boots," whispered Mrs. Macmaurice to Lady Aucherly, and as she was sitting near the door, made signs of silence to the colonel on his entrance, with, "hush, Miss O'Connor's singing."

At the same instant, Emily's sweetest notes warbled in his ear,

> "Then in thy bosom try
> What peace is there."

An attentive observer might have perceived a slight nervous affection for a moment pass over his upper lip, but the company were engaged in listening to Emily's plaintive

plaintive wild notes, and it escaped unnoticed.

When the air was concluded, Sir Philip and Lady Aucherly welcomed Colonel Macmaurice in a very flattering manner, and introduced him to Mrs. Dorrington and her daughters. The Miss Simmonses had so completely surrounded the piano-forté, that Emily could not immediately quit the instrument, but as Miss Dorrington and Henrietta were going to play a duet, she rose and took a seat next to Mrs. Dorrington.

"Here's a young lady, colonel," said Sir Philip, taking Emily by the hand, "to whom you have not yet been introduced; a great favourite of mine — Miss O'Connor — Colonel Macmaurice."

Emily with unaffected modesty, bowed to the colonel, who complimented her on her singing, in such an embarrassed manner, that it could not escape the penetrating eyes of Mrs. Dorrington.

Colonel Macmaurice was now called by

Sir Philip to the card table, and though he recovered his presence of mind, yet it was very evident, he was not in his usual spirits.

> "The image of a wicked heinous fault
> Lives in his eye."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.

LONDON IN PROSPECT.

THE name of Dorrington had been handed down through a long line of illustrious ancestors, to the present family; and though Mr. Dorrington held the pride of birth in the contempt it deserves, when unsupported by virtuous actions, yet the unprecedented increase of modern nobility, made him set a just value on the antiquity of his house.

Lord and Lady Dorrington kept up a great deal of the dignity of the old school, and regularly lived half the year in St. James's Square, and the remainder at Langony Abbey, the family seat in Cornwall.—Mr. Dorrington was their only son, but they

they had several daughters, who were all married to men of rank, and as Lady Dorrington was of a noble family, they had very extensive connexions among the nobility.

Mr. Dorrington, however, was of a reserved disposition; and preferring a domestic life, had lived in a style somewhat retired: he condemned the splendid follies and extravagance of those who make no scruple of spending a fortune in one night, to gain popularity in fashionable life: he was desirous rather of maintaining the honour of his family by the respectability of his character, than by shewy entertainments to rival the dissipated votaries of fashion. The Dorringtons were therefore very little known at a distance from their own residence, and even at Bath they were lost in the gay throng.

It was in London and at Langony-Abbey, that the consequence of this respectable family was most conspicuous, and their arrival in town being announced in the public papers, their door was soon crowded with visitors, and invitations poured in from all

quarters;

quarters; but Mrs. Dorrington deferred taking her daughters into large parties till after the birth-day; their time however was sufficiently occupied with visiting their noble relatives. At Lord Camleigh's they met Mr. and Mrs. Grosvenor: the former addressed himself to Mrs. Lovell, as an old acquaintance, and presented her to his wife, who received her with so much affability and friendliness that Mrs. Dorrington was immediately prepossessed in her favour.

There was a softness in Mrs. Grosvenor's manners, and an unaffected gracefulness in her movements which were strikingly captivating; she was condemned as thoughtless, dissipated, and extravagant, yet the sweetness of her disposition seemed to excuse all her foibles; and Mrs. Dorrington was so much pleased with her company, that she hoped to cultivate her farther acquaintance.

After Lucy and Henrietta had been introduced at court, they accompanied Mrs. Dorrington into the fashionable world; they were admired; and though not so much as

most

most mothers would have desired, yet to the full extent of Mrs. Dorrington's expectations or wishes. While they were enjoying the splendid gaieties of the metropolis, Lady Aucherly began to feel a little *ennui* from the sameness of the Bath amusements. She was now every day expecting Mrs. and Miss St. Clair in their way to town, which by no means tended to reconcile her ladyship to Bath.

It is a truth long established, that when we have obtained one object of our desires our mind still languishes after another: it was so with Lady Aucherly, and though she was perfectly sensible of the above observation, she was unconscious that she was an example of it herself. She had gained Bath, and now sighed for London.

She was in this state of mind, the morning after Mrs. St. Clair's arrival, and had just taken up a newspaper to see an account of the queen's birth-day, when Mrs. Macmaurice, who was still at Bath, made her appearance.

"Good

"Good morning; my dear Mrs. St. Clair, how d'ye do, I only heard this morning you were come; and as soon as I had swallowed my breakfast, I set out to pay my respects to you. L—d what a cold day it is, where's Maria?"

"She is rambling about with the Miss Simmonses," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"Then there'll be ten colds caught."

"She has only Miss Simmons and Phœbe with her," said Lady Aucherly, "Anna went out early this morning, to breakfast with her father."

"Well, but now," said Mrs. Macmaurice, "I want to talk to you about going to London: for go you must, if 'tis only to bring out your daughter; isn't it a sin Mrs. St. Clair, that she keeps her back so, and it's a shame, that she should be left at school all Christmas."

"She is very happy with her grandmother," said Lady Aucherly.

"That I won't believe; a young girl of seventeen, can't be happy with an old woman of seventy, while she has a sweet young mother,

mother, who ought to bring her out: now it's very hard if we three can't put our heads together, and hit upon a plan to get you to London; I thought of a scheme last night; let's get a little nearer the fire, and then I'll tell it — you know, *you* —" continued Mrs. Macmaurice, turning to Mrs. St. Clair, "are going to London — in a few days I believe —."

"To-morrow we set off."

"So soon! — well — now observe, when you get to London, you must ——."

Mrs. Macmaurice was interrupted by the door opening, and the appearance of Mrs. Mansell, who began, "Seeing Mrs. Macmaurice's carriage at the door, I thought I should find you at home, Lady Aucherly —."

"Your crimson liveries are so conspicuous," observed Mrs. St. Clair.

"I'm come to take my leave," continued Mrs. Mansell, "we are going to London to-morrow, and I should be so sorry to go without seeing you, and I have called

so

so often, when you have been out—so that—."

"What a bore this is," said Mrs. Macmaurice, in a whisper to Mrs. St. Clair.

"When shall we three meet again?" returned the other.

"Thunder and lightning, I'm sure, would keep her at home."

Here Miss St. Clair returned, bringing in a party who had joined her in Milsom-street.

"I found these good people," said Maria, "half frozen, at the bottom of the street, and have brought them here to thaw;—Lady Aucherly, is that to-day's paper?"

"I've not looked at it yet, but I believe it's full of the birth-day."

"Come," said Lady Mary Hope, "read it out to us."

"Good G—d!" exclaimed Lady Aucherly, "it's impossible for me to wade through all this: I'll run my eye over it, and if there's any thing remarkable, I'll read it."

"Here's a book of poems advertised, 'by

James

James Ross:"—there was a strange young man with the Dorringtons, of that name; I wonder whether it's the same."

"Law," said Mrs. Mansell, turning to Miss St. Clair, "I shouldn't have thought somehow, he could write all poetry-like, any more than you or I."

"I'm very diffident of my own abilities," replied Miss St. Clair, "but I've not the least doubt of yours."

"Oh law, I'm sure I——"

"It is the same gentleman," said Mr. Hope, "he is distantly related, I believe, to Mrs. Dorrington."

"'Tis mad Ross," cried Mrs. Macmaurice; "he stared at Lady Aucherly, as if his eyes would have leapt out of their sockets."

"I've read his poems," said Mr. Hope—"he seems an enthusiastic admirer of beauty."

"I heard he was very warm in his descriptions," observed Mrs. Temple. "I believe he has published something before."

"Attend—" said Lady Aucherly, "here

are the presentations—"the *lovely* Miss Purvis, by her aunt, Lady Garston—and here are the *amiable* and accomplished Miss Dorringtons, by their mother, the Honourable Mrs. Dorrington—and here come their dresses."

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Mansell, rising, "let me look over you, Lady Aucherly, pray."

"Here," said her ladyship, "you may read it at length—spangled crape petticoat, with lavender brown train: how *mild* they must have all looked."

"Hideous!" exclaimed Mrs. Macmaurice.

"Ah," said Mrs. Mansell, "but it mightn't have been so, for my cousin Lady Westenra once consulted me about her court-dress, and it was a green velvet train, and the petticoat white satin, ornamented with oak-leaves in green foil with *gold* acorns—and there, in the papers, they put down *silver*,—and they said her head-dress ——"

"L—d, what a memory you've got," said

Mrs.

Mrs. Macmaurice, bursting into a loud laugh.

"The papers are very inaccurate," observed Lady Aucherly, humouring the seriousness with which Mrs. Mansell treated the subject.

"Oh, terrible, and you may suppose 'twas *very* provoking to my cousin, Lady Westerra, and vex'd *me* too—for they said her head-dress ——"

"Don't you think," interrupted Mrs. Macmaurice, "we have talk'd enough about dress; what does Mr. Hope say?"

"Indeed," replied he, "I began to suspect, the conversation was intended as a hint for me to go."

"'Tis treating you unmercifully," said Mrs. St. Clair; "Lady Aucherly, is there any thing else in the paper?"

"Oh law, yes," cried Mrs Mansell, "her ladyship hasn't read the Queen's and Princesses' dresses."

"I believe, I'd better go," said Mr. Hope.

 "You

"You may venture a little longer," said Lady Aucherly. "Mrs. Macmaurice, here's an intimation of Mrs. Grosvenor's intended ball."

"Ah, in confirmation of my letter: what do they say about it?"

"*Mr. Grosvenor's splendid mansion in Portland-Place has been recently fitted up, with various elegant improvements.* — Then follows," continued Lady Aucherly, "a long description of the furniture, Egyptian sophas, tripods, candelabræ, and antique et cæteras."

"L—d, what a fuss!" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, laughing, — "I'm sure it's all Grosvenor's doing; is there any more about it?"

"Yes, I'm now coming to the point — *We hear Mrs. Grosvenor commences her winter campaign with a masqued ball, the beginning of next month.*"

"Then we shall soon hear of Lady Hillingdon's giving a fête," said Mrs. Temple.

"Oh

"Oh, but Mrs. Yorke cuts her out now," observed Lady Mary Hope: "She's a very fine woman."

"Rouge and candle-light do wonders," added Mrs. St. Clair.

"I believe 'tis getting rather late," said Mrs. Mansell.—"Lady Aucherly, *could* you lend me that paper to take home—Mr. Mansell takes in the Courier, but I should like to compare them—about the dresses, you know—and I'll be *sure* to return it soon."

It was nearly an hour before the *trio* were left to themselves.

"L—d, what a sad interruption," exclaimed Mrs. Macmaurice, drawing nearer to Lady Aucherly.

"Now, then, for your scheme," said Mrs. St. Clair.

"True—when you get to town, you must tell Caroline to write Sir Philip or her mother, how much she longs to see them, and hoping they will come up to town—*that*; you know, Lady Aucherly, will break the ice to Sir Philip."

" It's a better thought, perhaps, than you are aware of: Sir Philip is so fond of Caroline, I believe she could persuade him to any thing."

" And when the letter comes," continued Mrs. Macmaurice, " you must follow it up, by exerting all your influence."

" Times are sadly changed—but I'll do what I can."

" As I go to-morrow," said Mrs. St. Clair, " I'll thank you to draw up full instructions, in time for my embassy—Oh, here are the girls again; we mustn't let them into the secret."

Maria had brought home some new music, and was in the middle of a favourite Polacca, when Gifford entered with a note. " It's for Miss Simmons," said Lady Aucherly; " you'll find her in her room."

" Let's go and see what it can be," said Mary, running up stairs, followed by Phœbe.

In a few minutes Gifford returned, begging Lady Aucherly to go up stairs, for the young ladies were in a dreadful consternation,

nation, and Miss Simmons was in hysterics.

"Good G—d!" exclaimed Lady Aucherly.

"Oh L—d!" cried Mrs. Macmaurice, "perhaps their father's dead, and as I shall be only in the way, I'll go—so D. I. O."

Lady Aucherly hastily wished her a good morning, and ran up stairs, leaving Mrs. St. Clair and Maria to form various conjectures.

END OF VOL. I.

Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-Street, London.